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THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 10, 2000

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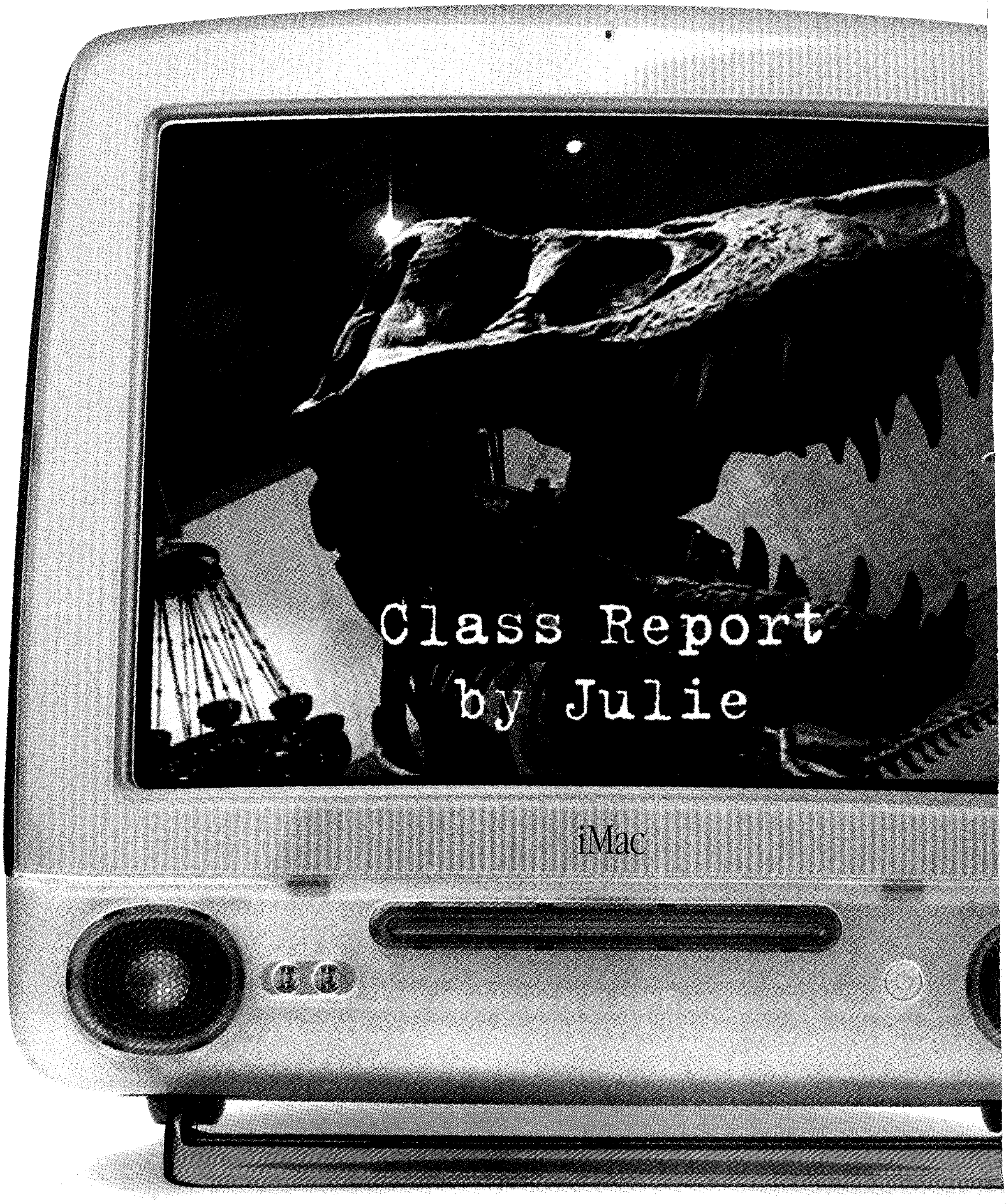

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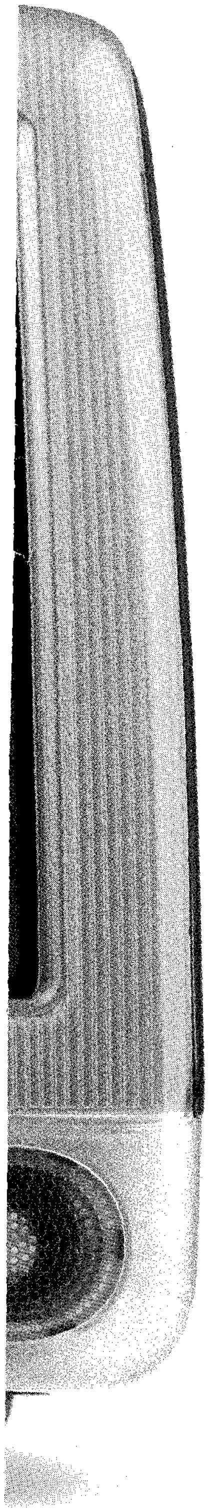

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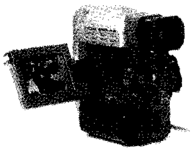

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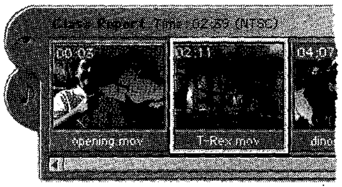

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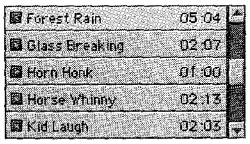

Forest Rain 05:04
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Horse Whinny 02:13
Kid Laugh 02:03

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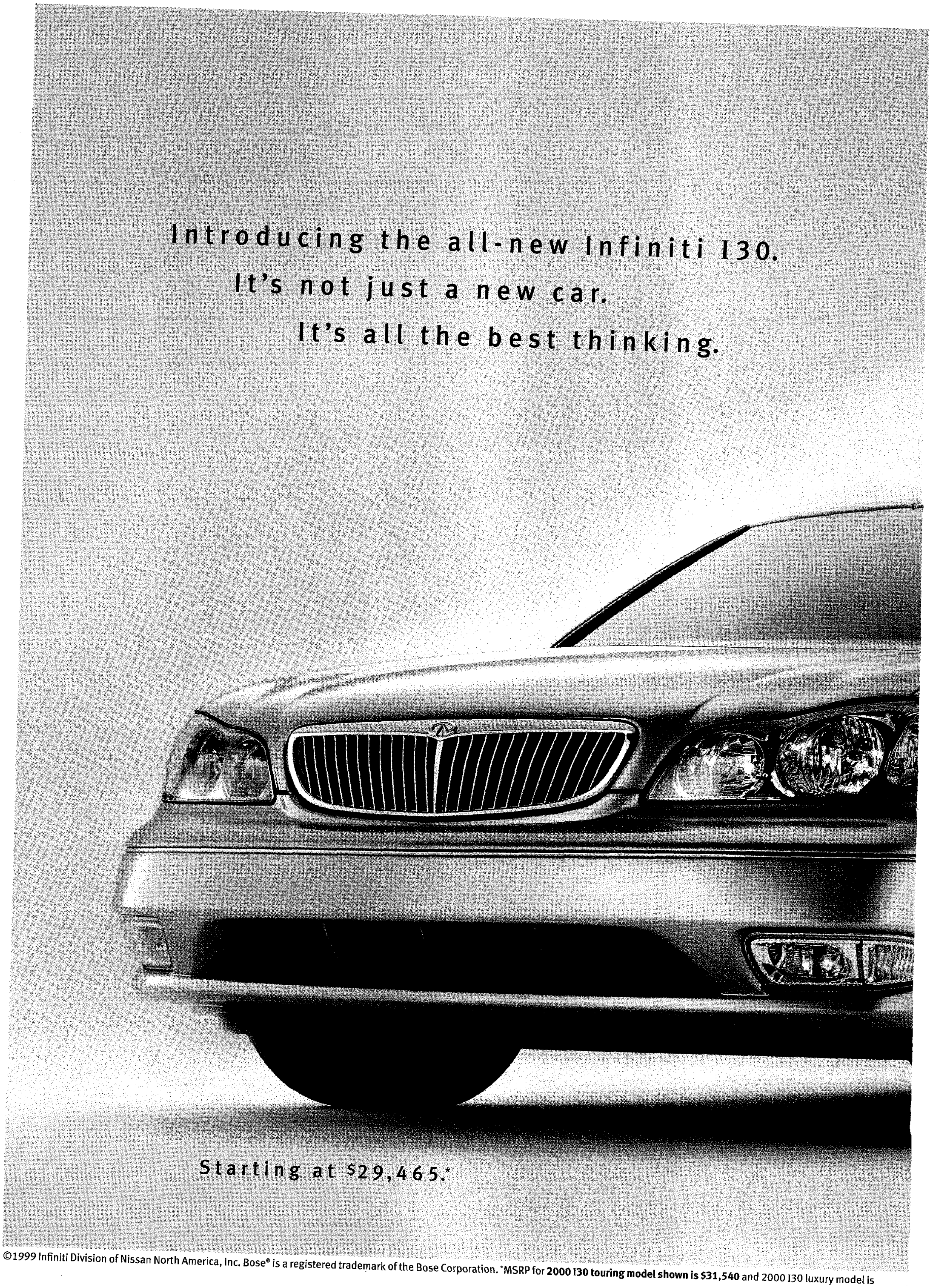
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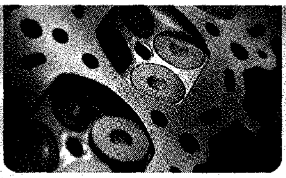

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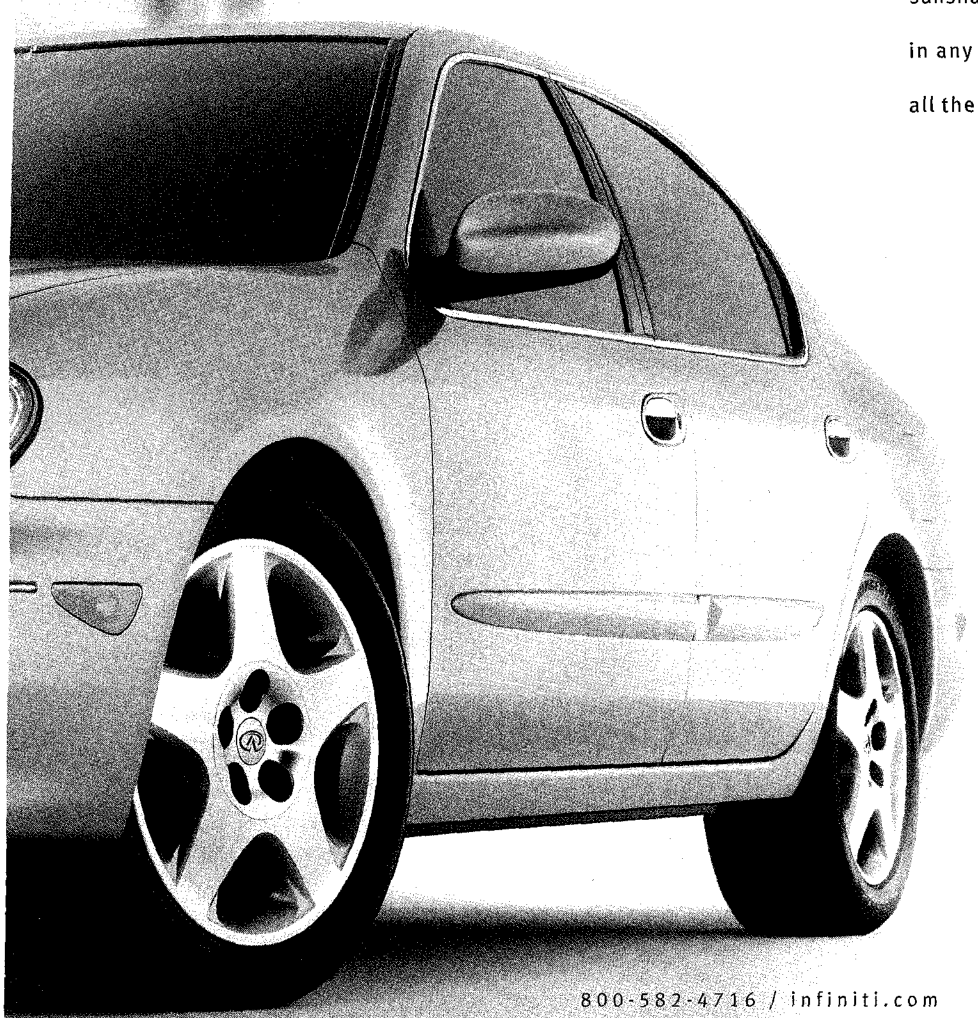

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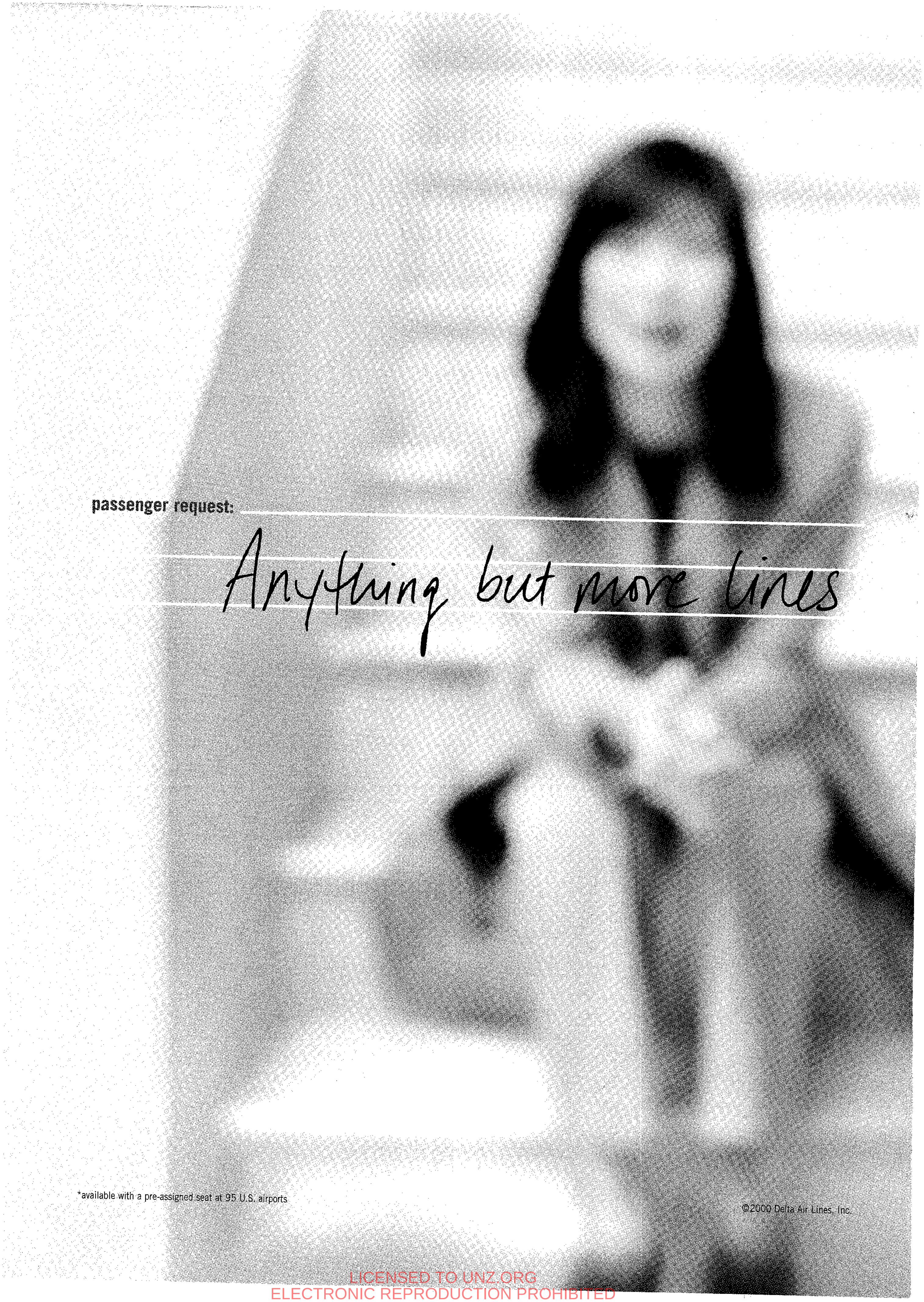

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By
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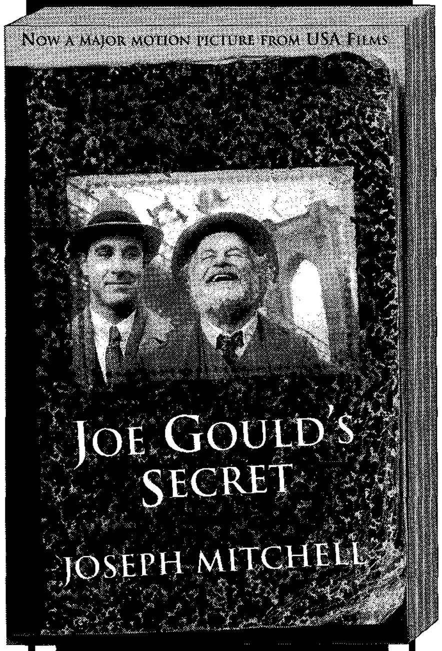

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THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 10, 2000

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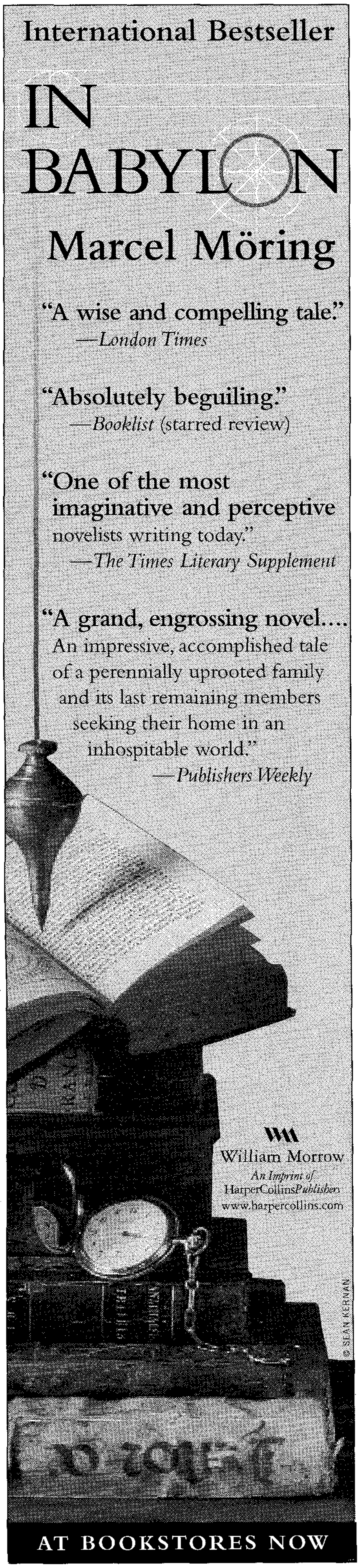
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AT BOOKSTORES NOW

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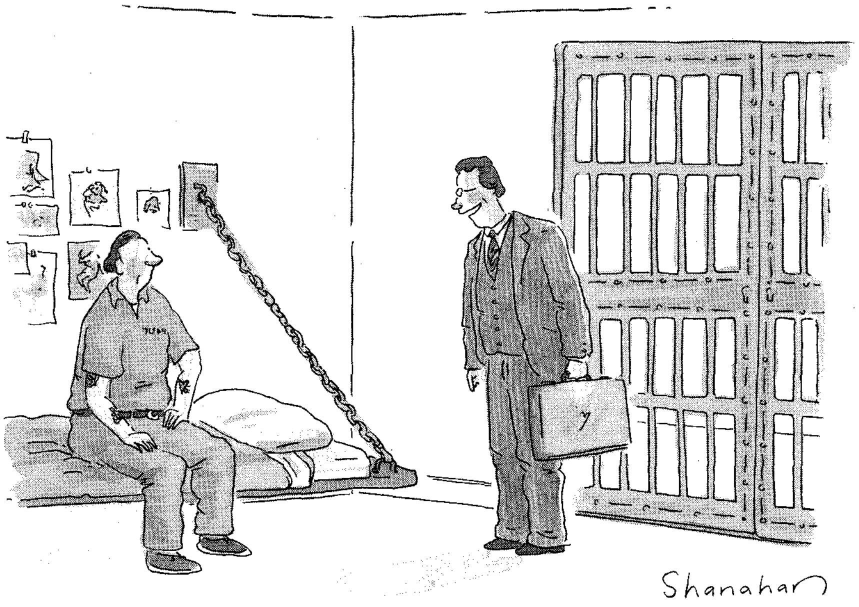
Calvin Tomkins (Takes, p. 81) writes about art and cultural affairs for the magazine. ♦



"Nothing from the governor, but I did manage to get you a tax extension."

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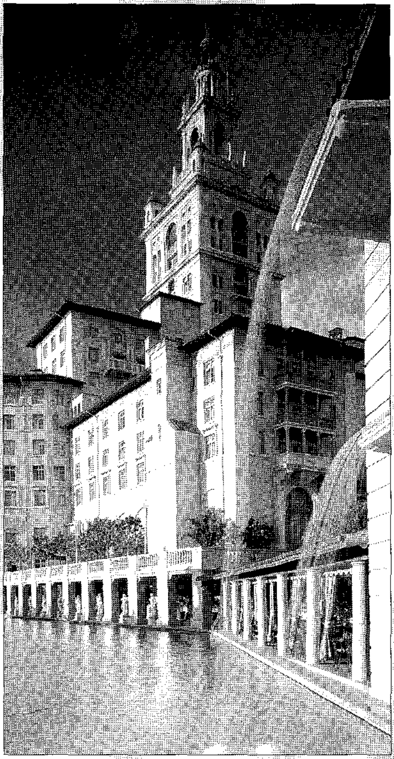

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CONTRACEPTION AND CANCER

"John Rock's Error," by Malcolm Gladwell (March 13th), demonstrates why limitations on legal, safe contraception can be extremely dangerous to women's health. But what is often lost in the political, emotional, and moral discussion about contraception is that such limitations also thwart the potential for life-saving research in other areas. Dr. Rock's breakthrough work on the Pill, for example, paved the way for future scientists to investigate more effective therapies for ovarian, endometrial, and breast cancer.

Seymour L. Romney, M.D.
Chair, Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health
New York City

Malcolm Gladwell's article suggests, perhaps inadvertently, that women's social, political, and economic equality comes only at the price of the prescriptive regulation of our menstrual cycles. But when researchers ask women what they think about using a new form of contraceptive that might reduce the risk of certain kinds of cancer, they might also ask whether we think our menstrual rhythms are what prevent us from achieving the equality we deserve. My guess is that we'd suggest that the burdens of child-rearing, when assumed to be women's alone, are what prevent us from leading the healthier and happier lives that medical scientists are working on.

Jessica Silbey
Boston, Mass.

Mr. Gladwell argues that women who menstruate monthly are historically unnatural, and that increased menstruation is the reason that rates of breast and ovarian cancer have risen in recent decades. But this argument is based on the premise that it is "natural" for a woman to be pregnant or nursing a child for her entire reproductive life. Gladwell cites one study, of the agrarian Dogon culture, to support this premise, but, if effective studies to determine the "natural" rate of menstruation are to be done, they must include such diverse groups as Australian Aborigines, who remain infertile for long periods of time when food supplies are low, and childless lesbian women, who do not use contraceptives. This article left me impressed with John Rock, and deeply suspicious that pharmaceutical companies are spreading unproven rumors about women's bodies in order to sell more drugs in an already oversaturated marketplace.

Lara Dale
Berkeley, Calif.

Malcolm Gladwell replies:
Ms. Dale is right in pointing out that studies of what is "natural" in menstruation must include as wide a variety of women as possible. As it turns out, we do have studies on a considerable range of aboriginal and pre-modern societies, virtually all of which support Beverly Strassmann's general conclusions from the Dogon about the relative infrequency of menstruation. What's more, for several hundred years nuns have been observed to have significantly higher rates of breast cancer than the general population; more recent research has arrived at similar findings about childless lesbians. These results are consistent with the idea that women who deviate from the historic pattern of infrequent ovulation—and who never experience the protective effects of pregnancy—are at higher risk for breast cancer. Finally, I would be surprised if any breast-cancer patient found the pharmaceutical marketplace for that disease to be "oversaturated."

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

advertisement

THE NEW YORKER FESTIVAL

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FRIDAY MAY 5TH

Tickets are $15.

FICTION READINGS

Sherman Alexie and Nick Hornby
8 P.M. Theatre for the New City

Donald Antrim and Annie Proulx
8 P.M. Altman Building

Julian Barnes and Muriel Spark
8 P.M. Wollman Auditorium at Cooper Union

Junot Díaz and George Saunders
8 P.M. Pravda

Tony Earley and Edna O'Brien
8 P.M. Joe's Pub

Deborah Eisenberg and Tobias Wolff
7 P.M. The Bitter End

Richard Ford and Alice Munro
8 P.M. Angel Orensanz Foundation

Jonathan Franzen and Cynthia Ozick
8 P.M. The Players

Matthew Klam and Stephen King
7 P.M. Bowery Ballroom

Jhumpa Lahiri and William Trevor SOLD OUT
8 P.M. Glucksman Ireland House

Chang-rae Lee and Jeanette Winterson
8 P.M. Tonic

Antonya Nelson and T. Coraghessan Boyle
8 P.M. Mercury Lounge

Zadie Smith
(a second reader to be announced)
9:30 P.M. Bowery Ballroom

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SATURDAY MAY 6TH

PERFORMANCES
INTERVIEWS

Tickets for all daytime events are $15. Tickets for the Saturday-night New Yorker humor revue are $25 and $35.

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

Calvin Trillin on Calvin Trillin
11 A.M. American Place Theatre

Mark Singer and Ricky Jay SOLD OUT
1 P.M. Celebrity Room at the Friars Club

John Lahr on Noël Coward (with a special appearance by Elaine Stritch) SOLD OUT
3 P.M. Morgan Library

Adam Gopnik on Saul Steinberg
4 P.M. Auditorium, Equitable Center

THE NEW YORKER "IN CONVERSATION WITH"

David Hockney interviewed by Lawrence Weschler NEW EVENT!
11 A.M. Auditorium, Equitable Center

Paul Simon interviewed by David Remnick
1 P.M. Auditorium, Equitable Center

Kofi Annan interviewed by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
2 P.M. Princeton Club

Philip Hamburger interviewed by Mary Gordon
3 P.M. New Dramatists

Jon Stewart interviewed by David Remnick
4 P.M. American Place Theatre

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Annals of Business
Is big business bad for the Internet?
11 A.M. Princeton Club

Annals of Politics
The Presidential campaign. SOLD OUT
11 A.M. Newseum/NY

Annals of Journalism
The life and work of Joseph Mitchell.
11 A.M. Morgan Library

Annals of Medicine
Fear of illness.
4 P.M. Princeton Club

Annals of Writing
Young writers. SOLD OUT
4 P.M. Float

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Steve Earle with Bill Buford and Nick Hornby SOLD OUT
1 P.M. Float

Suzanne Farrell with Joan Acocella
2 P.M. City Center

V. S. Naipaul with Bill Buford
4 P.M. Princeton Club

ARCHITECTURAL TOUR

Fifteen Buildings That Changed New York
with Paul Goldberger SOLD OUT
Bus leaves Saks Fifth Avenue at 1 P.M.

THE NEW YORKER HUMOR REVUE

An original work by ***Wendy Wasserstein.***
8 P.M. Town Hall

SUNDAY MAY 7TH

BRUNCH
CONVERSATIONS
POETRY IN THE PARK

Tickets for brunches are $30. Tickets for all other events are $15. No tickets are necessary for the poetry reading in Bryant Park.

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Broadway Brunch with John Lahr
Life in the theatre.
11:30 A.M. Grand Ballroom at the Manhattan Center

Cartoon Brunch with New Yorker Cartoonists SOLD OUT
Eggs funny-side up.
10 A.M. Café SFA, Saks Fifth Avenue

Crime Brunch with Pete Hamill SOLD OUT
Murder strikes back.
11:30 A.M. Pershing Square Café

Film Brunch with David Denby
The pitfalls of indie success.
11 A.M. The Screening Room

Jazz Brunch with Special Guests
The contemporary masters. SOLD OUT
12:30 P.M. Birdland

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

Robin Williams interviewed by Lillian Ross
1 P.M. Juilliard Theatre

Frank Gehry interviewed by Paul Goldberger SOLD OUT
4 P.M. Condé Nast cafeteria

PANEL DISCUSSION

Annals of War
Sixty years of war correspondence.
1 P.M. Yale Club

POETRY IN THE PARK

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ANIMAL MAGNETISM
Mabou Mines' latest work, a "live cartoon in animal drag," written by Terry O'Reilly, about a monkey and a rhino involved in a star-crossed love affair. Previews April 5-6. Opens April 7 at 8. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424.)

BLOOD ON THE DINING ROOM FLOOR
The WPA Theatre presents a musical based on Gertrude Stein's "A Murder Mystery," written by Jonathan Sheffer. Previews begin April 6. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's drama, which was inspired by a meeting in 1941 between the German physicist Werner Heisenberg and his Danish counterpart Niels Bohr. Michael Blakemore is the director. In previews through April 9. Opens April 11 at 6:30. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GREEN BIRD
The director Julie Taymor brings Carlo Gozzi's fairy tale to the stage with puppets, masks, and live performers. The music is by Elliot Goldenthal. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical, based on the last days in the life of you know who. Gale Edwards is the director. In previews. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's first play, set in 1977, about the lives of a group of Pittsburgh gypsy-cab drivers. Previews begin April 8. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE MUSIC MAN
Craig Bierko is Professor Harold Hill, and Rebecca Luker is Marian the Librarian, in a revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical. Susan Stroman is the director. In previews. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

NAKED
A new translation of the Pirandello play, starring Mira Sorvino and Daniel Benzali and directed by John Rando. In previews through April 8. Opens April 9 at 7. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

NOEL COWARD'S SUITE IN 2 KEYS
Two of the playwright's last works, "Shadows of the Evening" and "A Song at Twilight," performed by Hayley Mills, Judith Ivey, and Paxton Whitehead and directed by John Tillinger. In previews through April 9. Opens April 10 at 7. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			5	6	7	8
9	10	11				

THE REAL THING
From London, a Donmar Warehouse staging of Tom Stoppard's 1984 play, directed by David Leveaux. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN
Patrick Stewart portrays a bigamist in Arthur Miller's play. David Esbjornson is the director. In previews through April 8. Opens April 9 at 6. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

ROSE
Olympia Dukakis has the title role in a new play by Martin Sherman, which traces a Jewish woman's life, from her childhood in Russia to the Warsaw ghettos to Miami Beach. Nancy Meckler is the director. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

TALLER THAN A DWARF
From the pen of Elaine May, a new comedy starring Matthew Broderick and Parker Posey and directed by Alan Arkin. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

THE WILD PARTY
Joseph Moncure March's Jazz Age poem is the basis for Michael John LaChiusa and George C. Wolfe's new musical, starring Mandy Patinkin, Eartha Kitt, and Toni Collette. Mr. Wolfe is the director. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
A musical based on the Verdi opera. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

AMADEUS
From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

AMERICAN BUFFALO
An Atlantic Theatre Company staging of David Mamet's 1975 play. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/27/00.) (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ARMS AND THE MAN
A Roundabout Theatre production of Shaw's 1894 play. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

BAD BOY NIETZSCHE
Richard Foreman's examination of intellectual accountability and a philosopher's slide into madness. It's a smart play with a big payoff and, like all of Foreman's work, is the sort of thing that sticks in the brain in the best possible way. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

BETWIXT
The heretofore solo artist David Cale's first duet, co-starring Cara Seymour, is a collection of portraits of English expatriates in America. (St. Clements, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes April 16.)

THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS
In this exuberant take on "The Comedy of Errors," the action has been shifted to a hip-hop realm, and the basic ideas remain the same, but the four extravagantly talented writer-actors (who play all of the parts) make it seem altogether new. (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

CONTACT
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18-25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

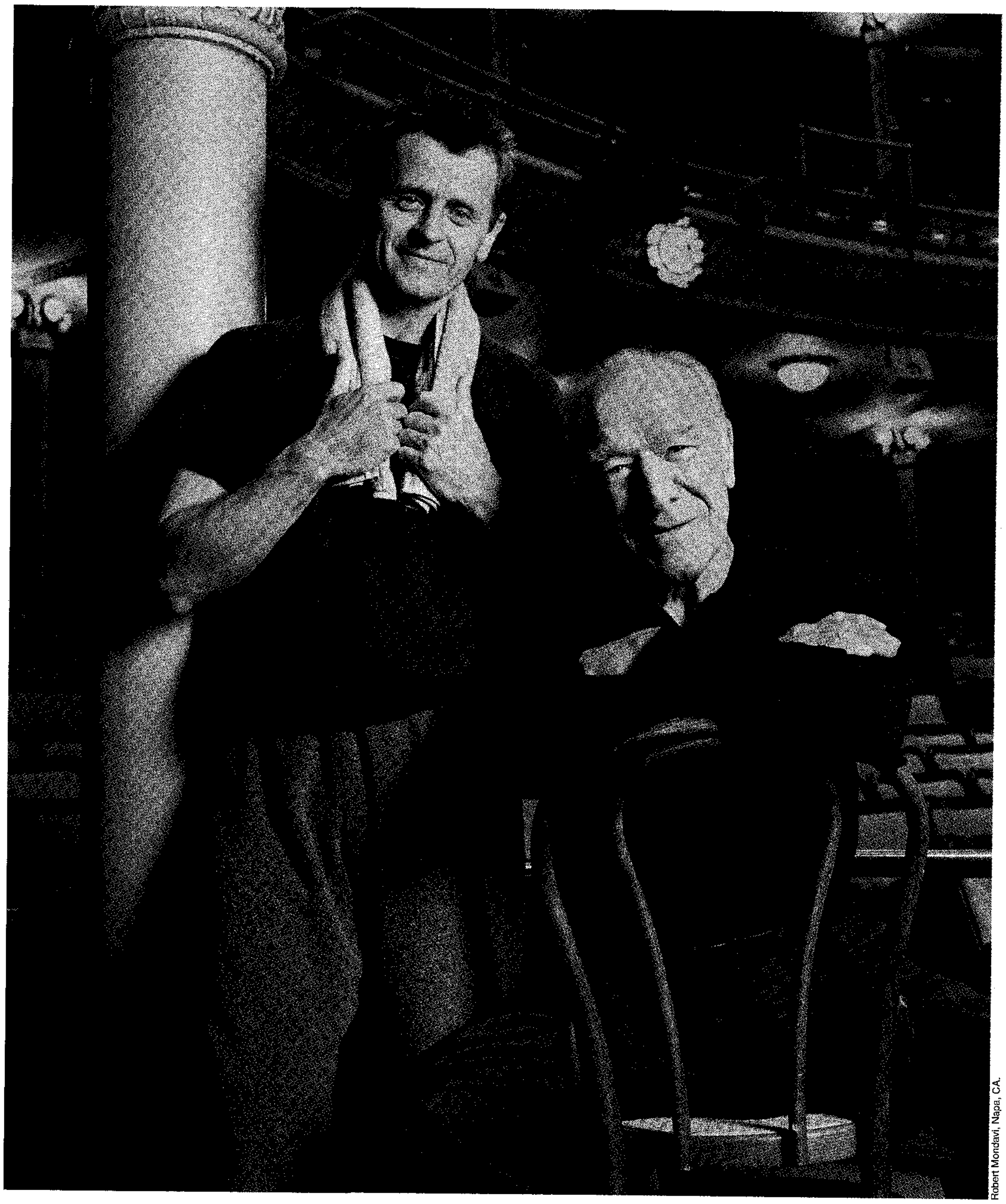
DAME EDNA: THE ROYAL TOUR
Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (11/1/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Donald Margulies's new play is a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

THE DIRECTOR
Through the character of a theatre director who tries to find truth by playing abusive mind games with everyone he knows, the playwright Nancy Hasty asks whether acting (which is essentially lying) can reveal deeper truth. It's a smart play, and, though it's not entirely satisfying intellectually, John Shea's brilliant performance as the director almost makes it seem so. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

DOWN THE DRAIN
The Adobe Theatre Company's latest offering is a play by Stanton Wood based on the Susan Smith case, in which a young white woman drowned her two sons in her car and then reported they'd been kidnapped by a black man. Under the sure hand of Paul Zablocki, the production illuminates the murderer's motives and her sometimes comic effect on the small town where she lived, without ever forget-

Mikhail Robert
Baryshnikov *on* Mondavi.



Robert Mondavi, Napa, CA.

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Robert knows this.

– Mikhail Baryshnikov

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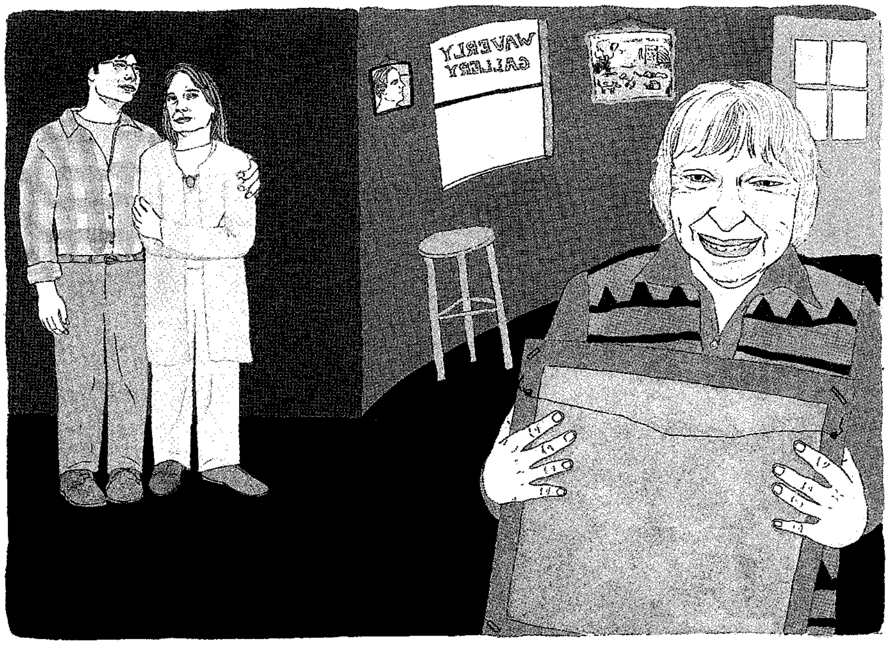

Josh Hamilton, Maureen Anderman, and Eileen Heckart, in "The Waverly Gallery."

LARA TOMLIN

ting the deaths of the children or lapsing into sentimentality. Tami Dixon's performance as the mother is the key to the evening's success: without ever asking for the audience's sympathy, she elicits an understanding of how a mother could murder her own children. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 532-8887.)

FUDDY MEERS
David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy relies heavily on handicap humor: one of the characters is blind in one eye, and has a limp, a lisp, and an ear that's a "twisted mass of burnt scar tissue"; another has garbled speech as a result of a stroke; another is—ha ha ha—dyslexic. The excellent cast makes the most of what cleverness the play does contain; nonetheless, you may leave the theatre with the feeling that you just attended a Helen Keller-joke marathon. (3/6/00) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

THE HOLOGRAM THEORY
Creepy club kids who live on drugs and kill for sport, the ghost of a murdered man who may also have been a murderer, a self-absorbed journalist who gets into bed with a killer to get a good story, a pompous father who knows everything but his own kid. If, as one of the characters in Jessica Goldberg's mixed-up play proposes, the world is like a hologram, in which each fragment, however screwy, contains the whole, then we're all responsible for her half-baked and annoying play, and we deserve to sit through it. (McGinn Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200. Closes April 9.)

HOUSE ARREST
Anna Deavere Smith's latest solo show. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 9.)

IMPERFECT LOVE
The tightrope between love and ambition is delineated with passion, charm, and wit in this retelling of the story of the great Italian actress Eleonora Duse and her playwright lover Gabriele D'Annunzio (here called Gabrielle Torrisi), written and directed by Brandon Cole. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 969-0166. Closes April 16.)

JACKIE MASON: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING
The comic is back on Broadway. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JAMES JOYCE'S THE DEAD
Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story. (11/8/99) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

KISS ME, KATE
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

MISS LULU BETT
Zona Gale's 1920 play about a spinster's emancipation. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-2031.)

A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN
A solid and satisfying revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1943 drama about the unrequited love between a conniving farmer's faithful and unfulfilled daughter and the broken-down mess of a man she loves. Gabriel Byrne's performance as James Tyrone, an alcoholic actor who returns from New York to unburden himself in the arms of the earth mother Josie, is something to see: though his character is half-dead from drink, Byrne's vivid portrait conjures all the dimensions of the tortured emotion that got him there. Cherry Jones, however, usually a master of subtlety, delivers such a mannered portrayal of Josie that she seems like Teflon; Byrne's performance practically slides right off her. But all in all it's fine Broadway theatre and not to be missed. Daniel Sullivan directed. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians comes to Broadway. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SWING!
A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's new comedy, about an antidote to midlife malaise, stars Linda Lavin, Michele Lee, and Tony Roberts. (3/20/00) (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 16.)

THE TIME OF THE CUCKOO
Arthur Laurents' 1953 play, set in Venice, stars Debra Munk as a romantically deprived American woman (or spinster, as they called them in the old days) who gets a chance at a vacation affair with an Italian shop owner. It's a lovely production of a dated play, with roundly good acting. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

TRUE WEST
Philip Seymour Hoffman and John C. Reilly star in Sam Shepard's 1980 play, under the direction of Matthew Warchus. (3/27/00) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Eve Ensler's one-woman show is now being performed by a rotating three-woman cast. There's a certain amount of shtick involved, but most of the stories are touching and memorable. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

WAITING IN THE WINGS
In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't: Bette Henritze, Elizabeth Wilson, Rosemary Harris, Dana Ivey, and the evergreen Lauren Bacall. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE WAVERLY GALLERY
Eileen Heckart portrays an aging Greenwich Village art dealer who must give up her gallery, in a new play by Kenneth Lonergan. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

WHAT YOU GET AND WHAT YOU EXPECT
A witty soufflé of a play about the relative merits of giving in to one's urges (sexual, intellectual, social) and preserving appearances. The script, by Jean-Marie Besset (in a fluid translation, from the French, by Hal J. Witt), concerns the bureaucracy surrounding a competition to design the first memorial on the moon. It collapses a bit under the weight of a Big Statement at the end, but, even so, the evening is carried through by a terrific cast, in which Daniel Gerroll and Kathryn Meisle stand out. Directed with subtle charm by Christopher Ashley. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes April 9.)

THE WILD PARTY
In taking Joseph Moncure March's dark cautionary poem about a group of Prohibition-era profligates and turning it into a musical love story between an angry vaudeville clown and a louche flapper, the composer Andrew Lippa and Manhattan Theatre Club have ended up with a crass, overplayed muddle of mixed intentions and missed opportunities. There's plenty of talent on display—a great set by David Gallo, mostly good costumes, a few fun songs, and, especially, a terrific performance from Brian D'Arcy James, as Burrs the clown. But most of the tunes build to the typical pop-maudlin crescendo that blights contemporary musicals, and they're sung generically, without regard for character. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 9.)

THE YEAR OF THE BABY
A married couple goes underground after attempting to steal a baby, in a comedy by Quincy Long. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CATS
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FOOTLOOSE
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. (Closes April 9.)

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MISS SAIGON
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at
53rd St. 239-6200.

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at
St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

WIT
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St.
307-4100.

DANCE

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH
April 5 at 8: "Simon Sez," "The Gods Amused," "Medium: Rare," and "Contra Pose." ♦ April 6 at 8: "Aurora I," "Aurora II," and "Mending." ♦ April 7 at 8: "Simon Sez," the première of "Coup de Couperin," and "Paper Tiger." ♦ April 8 at 2: A family matinée. ♦ April 8 at 8: "Aurora II," "Cherokee Rose," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Felix: The Ballet." ♦ April 9 at noon: A family matinée. ♦ April 9 at 4: "Coup de Couperin," "The Gods Amused," "Tarantella," and "Apple Pie." ♦ April 11 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Echo," "Yo Shakespeare," and "Mending." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 23.)

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG
During the second week of a three-week engagement, the forty-two-member company, under the direction of Boris Eifman, performs "Red Giselle." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 5-7 at 8, April 8 at 2 and 8, and April 9 at 2 and 7. Through April 16.)

"BURN THE FLOOR"
Twenty couples, with more than sixty ballroom championships and titles in all (Swedish Professional Latin, Hungarian Open, Finnish Amateur, United Kingdom Championship, etc.), join forces for a "Riverdance"-style treatment of the touch-dancing lexicon: waltz, jive, rumba, cha-cha-cha, jitterbug, Lindy Hop, and the rest. (Radio City Music Hall. 247-4777. April 5-6 at 8.)

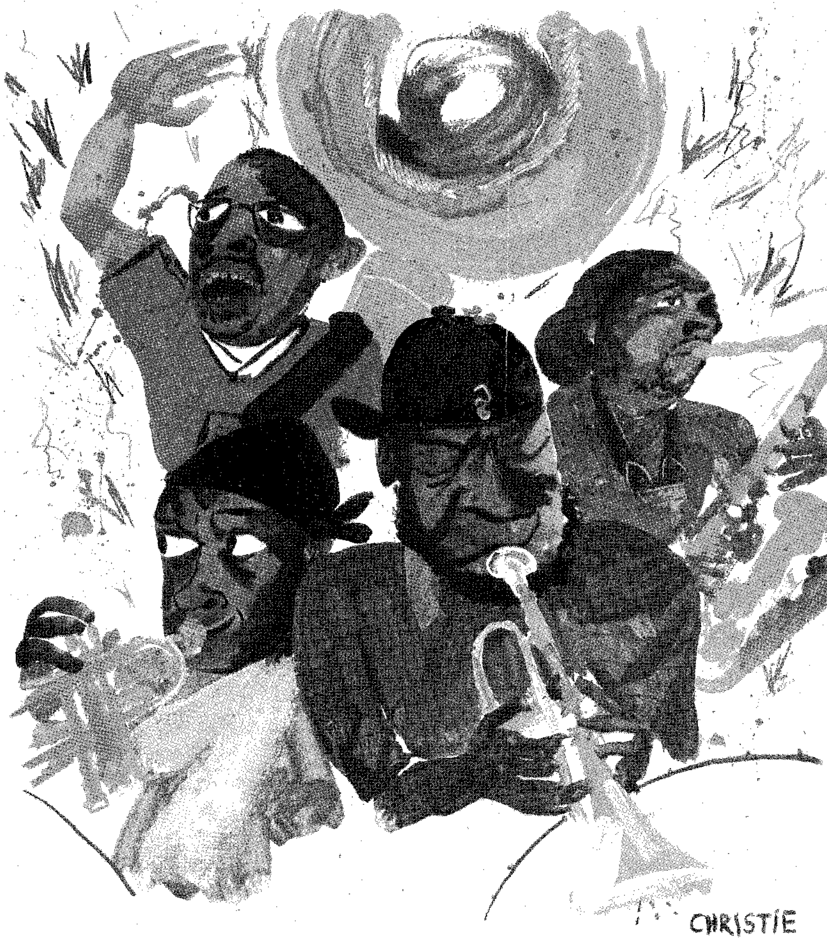
"THE PANTHER PEACE: PARTS I-III"
The choreographer Maia Claire Garrison applies her movement vocabulary (African dance meets urban contemporary) to an investigation of aggressiveness which swings between the perspectives of the Black Panthers and the Dalai Lama. (92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project, Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 415-5553. April 4-6 and April 8 at 8 and April 9 at 5.)

"HI EVERYBODY!"
The choreographer Tere O'Connor reprises his pivotal 1999 work, in which he tested the satiric performance skills of his gifted dancers, Chrysa Parkinson, Heather Olson, Marc Kenison, Rob Besserer, and Greg Zuccolo. The company is joined in this outing by Nancy Bannon. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 6-8 at 8 and April 9 at 3. Through April 23.)

"THE HORSE'S MOUTH GREETS THE NEW MILLENNIUM"
The choreographers Tina Croll and James Cunningham present a sort of working portrait of the contemporary dance scene: ninety performers (equally divided between dancers and choreographers) relate anecdotes from their professional lives, then improvise. The impressive list of collaborators includes Yvonne Rainer, Sara Rudner, Deborah Jowitt, Stuart Hodes, and Arthur Aviles, among others. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 4, April 6-7, and April 9 at 8:30 and April 8 at 3 and 8:30.)

"THE WATER"
The director and choreographer Scott Heron, a veteran of Circus Amok, imitates the controlled chaos of the title element with a work that includes gurus in spandex, a Kabuki drag act, a rope walker, and some half-dressed Gucci-shod sophisticates. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 6-9 at 8:30.)

LAKOTA SIOUX INDIAN DANCE THEATRE
The twelve-member company, founded on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, presents an evening-length work, "Cokata Upo! (Come to the Center)," a three-part work that features such traditional dances as the Eagle, the Buffalo, and the Fancy Dance. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 7 at 8.)



The ReBirth Brass Band, at the Knitting Factory.

GREG CHRISTIE

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Everybody talks a good game these days about honoring the jazz tradition, but you've got to applaud such dedicated preservationists as pianist Dick Hyman, vocalist Carrie Smith, and David Ostwald's Gully Low Jazz Band. These are players willing and able to dig deep into the repertoire of the nineteen-twenties with passion and not a drop of self-consciousness. Two younger Wynton Marsalis-band associates with a genuine taste for the riches of the past—trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and drummer Herlin Riley—will guest with the Gully Low Jazz Band. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. April 6 at 8.)

NO DOUBT
Having mined gold from America's short-lived infatuation with ska ("Tragic Kingdom," which came out in 1995, has sold more than ten million copies), No Doubt is set to release "Return of Saturn," which suggests a new debt to mid-period Pat Benatar. But the band is no flash in the pan. Gwen Stefani and company have been a live power for more than a decade, and their stage show is a well-honed aerobic production. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 6 at 8.)

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK
The riveting all-female a-cappella group. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 7 at 8.)

TINA TURNER
Last month Turner released a new CD, "Twenty-Four Seven," and promptly followed it with the disturbing announcement that the accompanying tour would be her last, although she'll continue to make CDs and put in appearances at the occasional live event. This may be your last chance to see those storied legs in action. With eighties soft-pop god Lionel Richie. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. April 7-8 at 8.)

EDDIE PALMIERI / JOSÉ MARÍA VITIER
The virtuosic small band of salsa pioneer pianist Palmieri employs the rhythmic swelter of Latin music to provide a base for fervent jazz improvisation. You'll be able to hear the rumble of pummelled keyboards and pounding congas clear down to Wall Street. For this show he shares the stage with the classically trained Cuban pianist Vitier, who's making his United States début. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. For information about tickets, call 243-4940. April 8 at 8.)

KORN
Bakersfield, California's, proud contribution to bad spelling is an aggro-metal collective whose specialties—hip-hop and hemp—make it a parent's worst nightmare. Last winter, the band débuted its latest record, "Issues," at the Apollo

Theatre, which may have been that venue's most noisome, and perhaps noisiest, event until Al Gore debated Bill Bradley there a few weeks ago. (Nassau Coliseum. 212-307-7171. April 8 at 8.)

MARIAH CAREY
Mariah's Rainbow Tour, which has been billed (somewhat disingenuously) as "One Night Only!," is the first international outing in eight years by the best-selling female artist of the past decade. With her latest album, "Rainbow," Carey has publicly guided her persona in a bolder, more urban direction. To this end, she'll be breaking out the bustiers and sharing the stage with a rapper named Da Brat. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. April 11 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

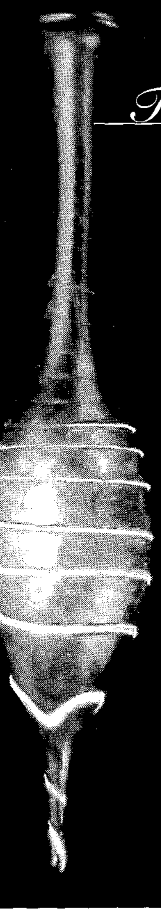
BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 7: **David Johansen and the Harry Smiths.** Beautiful American music. Johansen's accomplished acoustic band—guitarists **Brian Koonin** and **Larry Saltzman,** bassist **Kermit Driscoll,** and drummer **Joey Baron**—takes its name from the man who put together the hugely influential 1952 compilation "Anthology of American Folk Music." They use the songs and the spirit of those records as a jumping-off point for an evening of folk, country, and blues tunes that are heartfelt, funny, and often very odd indeed.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 6: The **Dirty Three,** an Australian guitar-violin-drum trio, brings its intense and often melancholy music to town. Violinist Warren Ellis is a member of Nick Cave's band, and the musicians play together with the comfort and ease of old friends and more than a touch of Cave's familiar aching darkness. When the darkness lifts, though, usually as the result of Ellis's manic bowing, the band offers joyful proof that the best rock and roll these days is no longer rock and roll per se. With fellow Touch and Go labelmates **Storm** and **Stress** and **Shannon Wright.** April 7-8: **Luna.** Led by Harvard grad Dean Wareham, who drove Galaxie 500 to college-rock greatness, this New York quartet makes a dreamy kind of music so frankly derivative that it's both disposable and eternal. In 1998, though, after four albums, Elektra found the band simply disposable and dropped it. They have since signed with the indie label Jericho and released the album "The Days of Our Nights." With **Champale,** singer-songwriter Mark Rozzo's unusually flexible and inventive ensemble, on April 7.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 7-8: **Joe McGinty's Loser's Lounge** deconstructs the music of Carole King. April 11: Former Blake Baby **Juliana Hatfield.** The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 7-8: In a more perfect world, all putatively great bar bands would live up to their hype as gamely as the **Radiators** do. Shored up by Ed Volker's hearty singing and boogie-driven keyboard riffs, this New Orleans-based group delivers its bluesy rock with all the radiant gusto you could ask for.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 5: **Tony Allen,** who was Fela Kuti's longtime drummer, stops by with his band Afrobeat 2000. April 7-8: **Elliott Sharp's Terraplane.** Sharp, who's usually heard producing unearthly sounds on a Frankensteinian instrument from which coat hangers and other metallic objects protrude, also happens to be a monster blues guitarist; the rootsy trio Terraplane is the proof. April 10-11: If you thought such instruments as the tuba, saxophone, trumpet, and trombone were only good for serious, contemplative improvisational jazz, then you'll be knocked off your chair



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by the powerful funk of New Orleans's **ReBirth Brass Band.** This ensemble comes to party, which is not to say its jazz roots aren't firmly established, and its nearly all-horn approach will make you wonder what a guitar and bass are for.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 7: The **Getaway People,** a funky, sample-heavy quintet from Norway.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—April 7: **Rogue's March,** the fiery rocking band of Hibernians led by the barroom-seasoned baritone of Joe Hurley. April 8: The **Sprague Brothers,** two harmonizing siblings from Southern California with a hankering for surf-guitar antics and rockabilly. The title of their début album, "Let the Chicks Fall Where They May," says it all. April 9: The **Flying Neutrinos,** an itinerant New Orleans jazz band, is a family affair. Cousins Ingrid Lucia and Todd Londagin lead the group: Lucia's sassy patter and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's, and wonder boy Londagin plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-like voice. They'll be swinging as they celebrate the release of their latest album, "The Hotel Child."

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—April 6: **Basement Bhangra,** an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. The d.j.s Rekkha and Joy spice the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional Malcolm X outburst or car crash. The frenetic but friendly dance floor is awhirl with turbans and saris, and Indian film clips are projected as a backdrop. This monthly party makes your average world-music event seem as bland as Esperanto. April 7: Master African drummer **Baba Olatunji** brings his inspired ten-piece ensemble in for the evening.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 7-8: Amiable, dependable, sleek—pianist **John Bunch,** guitarist **Bucky Pizzarelli,** and bassist **Jay Leonhart** aren't in the business of ruffling feathers. What they do best is weave a broadloom of gently intoxicating swing. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 9: If anyone can restore relations between Cuba and the U.S., it's pianist **Chucho Valdes.** Hear him live once at a New York jazz club, and you'll do anything you can to make sure he's permitted to return on a regular basis. Pianists are warned, though: Valdes, a terrifying composite of Art Tatum, Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, and countless less familiar, Cuban virtuosos, is also capable of making you wish you had never been born.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through April 29, **Barbara Cook.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through April 9: Saxophonist **Greg Osby,** a professional renegade once associated with the jazz-insurgent M-Base organization, has fostered his own contingent of smart, forward-thinking players, including pianist **Jason Moran** and drummer **Nasheed Waits.** With his sharp-edged tone and stuttering rhythms, Osby remains one of the least predictable and most engaging alto and soprano saxophonists to have emerged in the past two decades. Dining.

SWEET BASIL
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through April 9: **Kenny Barron's** love for all things Brazilian is no secret. The master pianist regularly adds tropical rhythms and romantic bossa-nova strains to his exceptional recordings, and he even entitled a recent composition "Sonia Braga," in honor of the cinematic temptress from down Rio way. Staffed with indigenous musicians, Barron's band, Brazilia, makes the pianist's tropical obsession explicit. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—April 7-8: **Larry Ridley's Jazz Legacy Ensemble.** Bassist and educator Ridley, whose résumé reads like a short history of modern jazz, has stocked his Jazz Legacy Ensemble with journeyman players—trumpeter **Virgil Jones,** saxophonist **Charles Davis,** pianist **Richard Wyans,** and drummer **Jimmy Wormworth**—all of whom will doff their hats to Ridley's former employer, trumpet phenomenon **Freddie Hubbard,** who, despite recent lip problems, will make a special appearance on April 7 to celebrate his sixty-second birthday.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 9: The **Stanley Turrentine** quintet. You judge a tenor saxophonist like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his invention but by his sound—in this case, a huge, rounded calling card of warm, gritty soul. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Once serenely indifferent to art after Gauguin, the Met's curators have been playing catch-up on MOMA's turf for fifty years. **"Painters in Paris: 1895-1950"** proves that they've come a long way. Nearly a quarter of the hundred or so paintings are by Picasso, including his famous portrait of Gertrude Stein, which she

Now there's a London bridge that can take you to the new millennium…
Le Pont de la Tour restaurant, London

bequeathed to the surprised museum at a time when it didn't own a single work by the artist. Also represented here in depth are Matisse, Bonnard, Braque, and Balthus. As you might expect, the Met's version of modernism has a slightly conservative flavor: tradition-loving eccentrics like Derain, Marquet, Vallaton, and Helion make a strong showing, while Duchamp, Dali, and Mondrian are missing. This may be a philanthropic accident, but it's a happy one, leaving New York with duelling, *Rashomonic* versions of twentieth-century painting's golden age. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Walker Evans,"** a comprehensive retrospective, the photographer's first. Through May 14. ♦ **"The World of Scholar's Rocks."** Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt."** Through May 7. ♦ **"Tilman Riemenschneider: Master Sculptor of the Late Middle Ages."** Through May 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—MOMA goes multiplex with the launch of **"Making Choices,"** the first eleven segments of an eventual twenty-four-part show all focussed on works made between 1920 and 1960. As they did for the recent "People, Places and Things," the curators have drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings to mount the show. But while that sprawling trilogy ricocheted from homogeneity to disjunction, this show offers a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist. A small gallery on the first floor features the lush photography of Man Ray; its larger next-door neighbor sports architectural drawings and models by Louis Kahn. On the second floor the succinctly titled "War" pairs photographs from the U.S. naval archives with Picasso's gut-wrenching grisaille painting "The Charnel House," from 1945, which echoes his masterpiece "Guernica." The segue from horror to housewares—an installation of etchings by still-life maestro Giorgio Morandi—is strange, but soothing. Curator Robert Storr's contribution, "Modern Art Despite Modernism," charts the course of representational paintings and includes a gorgeous Alex Katz portrait of his wife, Ada, which is so vital that it makes the models in the Philip Pearlstein painting to its right look like something from a mortuary slab. Through July 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—With green laser beams ricocheting through a six-story waterfall, and hundreds of TV screens providing ambient noise and light, the Nam June Paik retrospective looks, from ground level, like a sure-fire crowd-pleaser. Instead it leaves one disenchanted and puzzled. For the most part, the father of video art comes off as an unexpectedly slight figure, a likable, playful avant-gardist whose imaginative resources have seldom matched his commitment to the idea of innovation. Through April 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Whitney **2000 Biennial Exhibition,** with ninety-seven artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, and installation and Internet artists, as well as videographers and filmmakers) chosen by a team of six curators. Through June 4. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

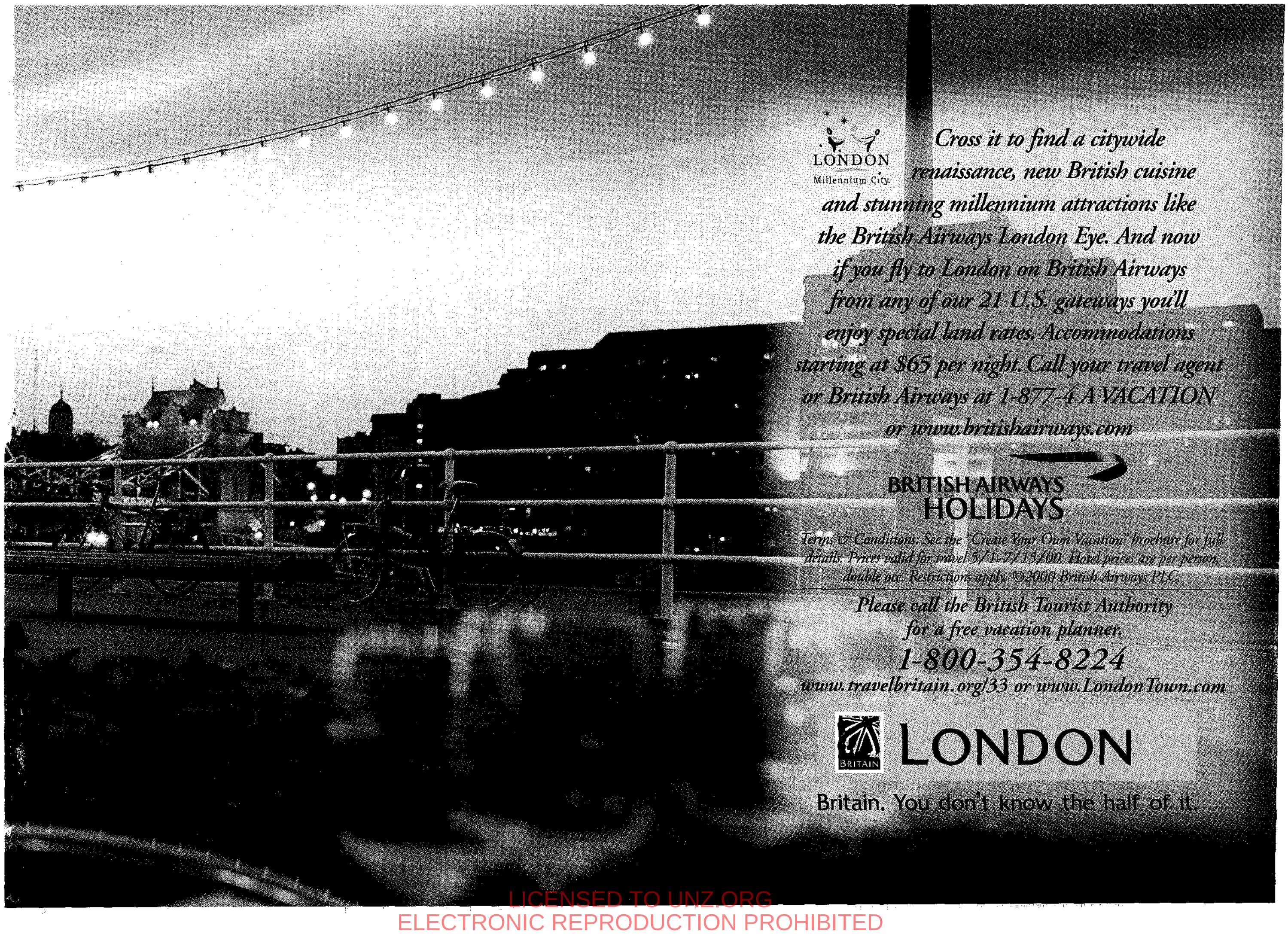
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The newly renovated Hayden Planetarium lets you enjoy a twenty-minute cosmic journey, narrated by Tom Hanks, which goes from Earth to the Milky Way out to the Virgo Supercluster, then through a black hole right back home. Reservations for regular Space Shows are advised, and available at 769-5200. ♦ **"Body Art: Marks of Identity."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Guennol Collection: Cabinet of Wonders."** Over the past fifty years, Alastair Bradley Martin and his wife, Edith, have amassed an eclectic collection of art and objects under the pseudonym Guennol, after the Welsh word for "martin" (the couple honeymooned in Wales). The installation of Joseph Cornell's "Starfish" smack in the center of the introductory wall text is a tip that you're in for something out of the ordinary. The show is cleverly organized around the theme of the seventeenth-century *Wunderkammer,* an assemblage of artistic treasures and natural wonders, rather than along more conventional chronological or art-historical lines. DeKooning's ferocious "Woman"—a fine drawing from the mid-fifties—salaciously bares her teeth beside a New Mexican sculpture of a female skeleton while a massive Japanese guardian head from the thirteenth century looks on. As for wonders, it's hard to beat the small chunk of rattlesnake agate titled "Gorilla Playing a Tom-Tom." Through May 7. ♦ **"Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo"** showcases the museum's complete set, one of the finest extant, by the influential master of the wood-block print. Through April 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—With dozens of bright hues of translucent plastic, glowing scrims and computer monitors, and occasional bursts of recorded machine-gun fire, the **National Design Triennial** makes Andrew Carnegie's stately Fifth Avenue mansion seem like the site of a smoothly executed palace coup. The curators, Donald Albrecht, Ellen Lupton, and Steven Skov Holt, have grouped works by eighty-three mostly young designers and firms under eight vague categories: Fluid, Physical, Unbelievable, and so on. Exuberance and breadth, not clarity, are the reigning spirits—which suits an era when architects, graphic



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BRITAIN LONDON

Britain. You don't know the half of it.

designers, and product designers wield ever more powerful software in an upbeat business cycle. The icons of the moment are here—the iMac, the Air Jordan, and pieces by Frank Gehry and Martha Stewart—along with the expected aerodynamic staplers, ergonomic toothbrushes, carburetor-shaped buildings, and sci-fi movie clips. If we had to take something home, though, it would be Robert Egger's pleasantly old-fashioned Go-Go Bike, a luscious hot-pink bicycle with a heart-shaped foldout liquor cabinet. Through Aug. 6. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FOLK ART
Columbus Ave. at 65th St. (977-7170)—**"Millennial Dreams,"** a delightful sampling of visionary art works, ranges from the Quaker Edward Hicks's sweetly docile "Peaceable Kingdom" to the prophetic charts of the itinerant preacher William A. Blayney, who was almost as concerned about copyright infringement as he was about the Antichrist. With paintings and sculptures by Mormons, Shakers, Millerites, and others, the show is as diverse theologically as it is aesthetically. Among the most poignant artifacts is a depiction of the "New Jerusalem," by Moses Weaver, a member of a celibate community founded on the teachings of Cyrus R. Teed (1839-1908). Weaver imagined the cult's headquarters as a grand linked ring of gardens and palaces. Today, however, his projected citadel looks suspiciously like a gated community. Through May 14. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

GEORG BASELITZ
Cavalier paintings of canines by a German master. The loose, creamy backgrounds and inky black outlines of his last New York show are still in evidence, but the signature upside-down figures are often rotated ninety degrees, as if to signal a time-out from the rules of the game. Standing before a sideways image of pink hands patting a sketchy pair of hounds' heads, it's tough to believe that Baselitz has been hailed as the heir to the brooding Gothic tradition. Through April 22. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

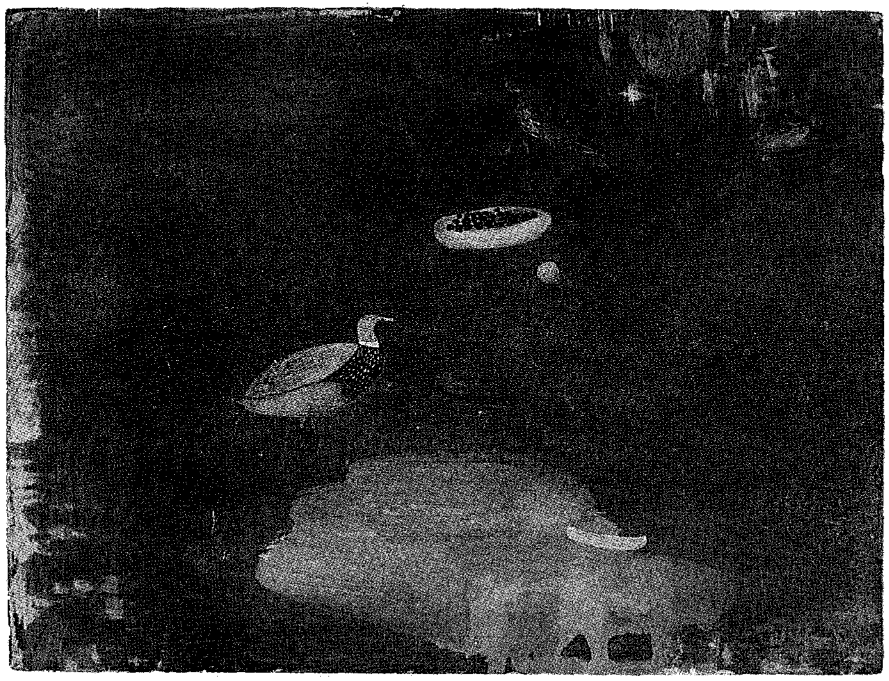
JANE FREILICHER
Poetic still-lifes and landscapes by the Emily Dickinson of the art world. Like the belle of Amherst, Freilicher doesn't stray far from home. She's been painting the same two views—from the windows of her West Village studio and her Watermill, Long Island, retreat—for more than thirty years. The intimate "Marigolds II," a jumble of orange and yellow blossoms ablaze against a bruised night sky, is nonchalant perfection. An antidote to irony. Through April 22. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

NANCY GRAVES
The late artist, who died in 1995 at the age of fifty-five, was intrigued by the natural world. Paleontology, archeology, botany—she covered enough subjects to fill an undergraduate's course load. Graves launched her career with eccentric, lifelike sculptures of camels, producing five films on the subject. Though a phalanx of blood-red dromedaries march diagonally across the graffiti-laden painting "Untitled #6," on view here, the show features the gaudy metal sculptures and garishly decorative paintings to which she devoted her post-camel career. Through April 20. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

PHILIP GUSTON
Small works made at the beginning and end of the artist's celebrated, controversial late period. Some of these improvisational images of hooded figures and banal objects are warmup exercises; others represent the artist at his laconic best. Our favorite shows a pair of bricks or rocks, stacked like a fledgling cairn. It's hard to imagine a more rudimentary motif: something that doesn't expect or perhaps deserve to be painted here finds its perfectly appropriate, clumsy, matter-of-fact voice. Through April 22. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

YVONNE JACQUETTE
Cityscapes, done from a nearly aerial perspective, painted from studios in the World Trade Center and Chicago's Sears Tower. Through April 15. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

"TRUE GRIT"
This intelligent show of seven women artists working in the turbulent sixties is gritty all right—from Nancy Spero's angst-ridden gouache "Poem I: Fuck You" to Nancy Grossman's macho assemblage of black leather, rubber, and metal, "Ali Stoker." Lee Bontecou's ferocious steel-and-canvas wall sculpture looks like salvage from a wreck, and the artist has described it as "war equipment with teeth." The Magnificent Seven has nothing on these dames. Through May 6. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.)



"Mallard Red No. 1," by Gaines Peyton, at Bridgewater/Lustberg & Blumenfeld.

Short List

JENNIFER BARTLETT
Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444. Through May 13.

ANTHONY CARO
Ameringer Howard, 41 E. 57th St. 935-1110. Through April 22.

DAN GRAHAM
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through May 20.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

ELIZABETH PEYTON
At their best, the brushy portraits of red-lipped epicenes which won this painter fame have an immediacy that recalls the one-take feats of Ingres sketches. At their worst, they seem like an art-world version of tulip mania. With this suite of pen, charcoal, and colored-pencil drawings on scratch pads and hotel stationery, Peyton extends her project a bit too far. This time out, her gentle sleight of hand is merely slight. Through April 15. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258.)

KIKI SEROR
From materials of the moment—cybersex chatroom transcripts and 3-D software—this young artist has composed a mechanically provocative début. Legible but unquotable, Seror's eager exchanges with X-Ray, He-rod, and Mark V appear as walls of blue typographical architecture, like metastasizing keyboards. Seror has also created an animated fly-through version of the randy texts: don a pair of spectacle monitors and you're Luke Skywalker, swooping across a Death Star of smut. Through April 22. (I-20 Gallery, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.)

DAN WALSH
Happy paintings that marry the breezy abstraction of Mary Heilman with the systematic rigor of Peter Halley. You nearly get a whiff of Magic Marker from the deceptively simple rendering (never mind that the materials are actually acrylic on canvas) as wobbly rectilinear forms culminate in architectonic compositions. In the front gallery, an untitled diptych contrasts a minimalist grid of gray on white, like so many rows of filing cabinets, with an accumulation of boxes in a jelly-bean-bright palette. The painting is narrowly banded at its top and bottom, as if to contain its buoyant contents. Through April 15. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

ERIC WOLF
These squiggly brush drawings turn everyday motifs—clouds, trees, vegetables, and the human figure—into excuses for euphoric, psychedelic pattern-making: everything coils, meanders, and undulates. If the effect feels artificial—as though Wolf had been carried away by the sheer pleasure of guiding ink across a surface—these eddying motions are natural, too. They're a reminder of the breezy volatility of the world around us, and of the happy bafflement that comes from staring for too long at something as familiar as a cabbage leaf. Through April 29. (Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

OTTO ZITKO
In his first U.S. exhibition, this Viennese abstractionist offers a group of blizzardy, scribbling paintings that cover six big aluminum panels and the entire front room of the gallery. They're delightful. Zitko's restless line pivots, switches back, and sprints, continually changing weight and direction. The resulting manic, monochromatic thickets suggest a Crayola version of Terry Winters. Could a kid do them? Almost, but only during that brief interval when the child, having not quite figured out the shapes of flowers and rockets, moves its fist with pure, chaotic exuberance. Through April 22. (Cheim and Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List

JEREMY BLAKE
Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.
Through April 15.
UGO RONDINONE
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through April 15.
AMY SILLMAN
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.
Through April 29.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

CASEY COOK
Grand-scale canvases of luscious Barnett Newman-style color adorned with porno marginalia. In this graphic pairing—overwhelming color and cramped scenes of fetish and bordello sex—it's color that wins. The bodies in standard hard-core presentations are clinical and anonymous, and all the emotional punch comes from the big, rich monochrome expanses. Through April 22. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

GAINES PEYTON
Delicately rendered migratory birds wandering on rough abstract panels, some even stopping long enough to lay pyramids of tiny eggs. Encaustic drips and scrapes become a foggy habitat of marshes and ponds. The artist's mix of techniques might sound dubious, but it succeeds at describing both the restless mallards' loneliness and nature's fleeting beauty. Through April 29. (Bridgewater/Lustberg & Blumenfeld, 560 Broadway. 941-6355.)

REBECCA PURDUM
Clouds of rubbed color, applied with the artist's fingertips, remain the basis of Purdum's enormously seductive abstraction. Here, as in her last show, however, she occasionally adds ruled lines, like faint, hesitant horizons. Purdum apparently wants to modify her atmospheric format but hasn't quite mustered the will to do so. It's easy to see why: some of these vapor-chamber compositions are among the most beautiful paintings being made today. "Around," with its massaged cool reds, looks like a Rothko seen through rippling scrims. Through April 22. (Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775.)

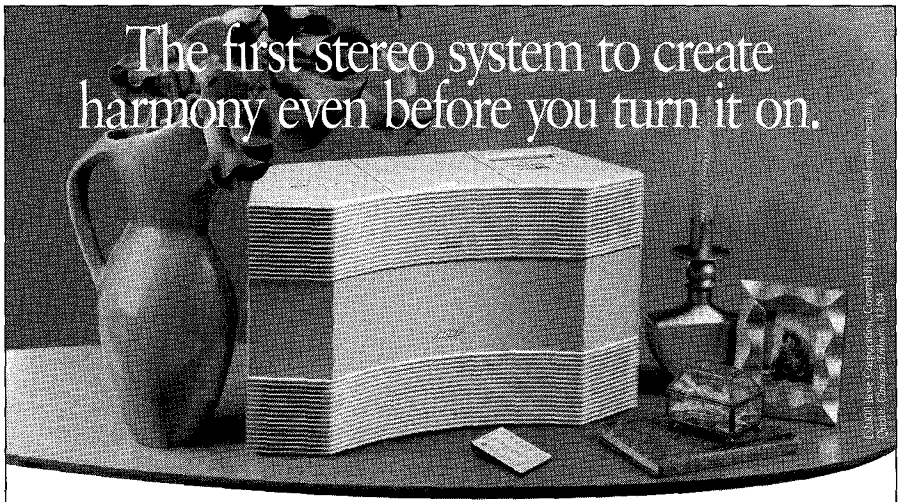
Short List

CHUCK CLOSE
Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.
Through May 6.
CARL FUDGE
Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through May 6.
RICHARD LONG
Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.
431-3685. Through April 29.
MARIA PORGES
Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through April 22.
CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS
Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.
Through April 22.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
April 5: An auction of Scandinavian furniture and decorative arts from the collection of dealer Arne Schlesch, who is retiring after forty-six years as a fixture on the New York antique scene. ♦ April 5-6: Two days of photography sales, including notable pieces from the collection of the 7-Eleven corporation. ♦ April 11: English and Continental silver, including a strong representation of Judaica. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
April 5: Photography. ♦ April 7: Wine. ♦ April 10-11: Auctions of jewelry, including pieces owned by the opera singer Bidù Sayão and the painter Tamara de Lempicka. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.) ♦ At Christie's East: An offering of sports memorabilia, including numerous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items owned by Joe DiMaggio—one of his jerseys, his golf cart, his Florida driver's license, and so on. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0430. April 5.)

DOYLE
Modern and contemporary paintings and decorative pieces. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. April 11.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

CHRISTOPHER BEIRNE
The abstract, high-gloss images here all "use nature as their source," as Beirne's representatives describe it. The better part of Beirne's work is done in the darkroom, manipulating colors and excising points of reference. Through April 8. (Boesky, 51 Greene St. 941-9888.)

KATE BELTON
Belton, a fine specimen of genus Y.B.A. (Young British Artist), has moved from staged interiors to small-scale still-lifes, making eerily threatening landscapes from flour, sugar, salt, potting soil, and a few props. Through April 29. (P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.)

CHRISTOPHER BERG
"Site-Seeing" includes such folk-art-like collaged wonders of the world as a bubbling, six-domed Capitol; an immense Empire State Building, with night sky at its top floor and sunlit rush-hour taxis on street level; and an *Über*-German highway interchange with bits of Bauhaus, Bavaria, and East Berlin in its sprawl. Through April 15. (Gallery 24, at 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.)

E. O. HOPPÉ
Hoppé, perhaps better known for his early-twentieth-century portraits and his co-founding of the London Salon of Photography, also published twenty-eight books, most of which were full of topologies like the ones shown here. These were shot in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, in English, German, and American cities and industrial areas. The prints are small, many less than eight by ten, and the compositions are assembled with a sophisticated geometry. Through April 22. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

THERESE MITCHELL
Former *New Yorker* staff writer Joseph Mitchell, famous in his day for his tales of the city's odder denizens, is famous once again as the subject of the new movie "Joe Gould's Secret." But Mitchell wasn't the only artist in his family. During the nineteen-thirties, his wife, Therese, roamed the streets alongside him, using her Roloflex to snap away at anything that caught her eye. Therese never showed her photographs, which went into storage after her death, in 1979. Their rediscovery is a minor historical treasure: the eighteen small, sharp photos, which range from reportorial images of Depression-era unrest to frank portraits, are a visual companion to her husband's profiles. Through May 14. (The Municipal Arts Society, 457 Madison Ave. 935-3960.)

MICHAEL O'BRIEN
O'Brien's minute details of the seascape are cross-processed within an inch of their lives, and survive. Some are shot on infrared film, and many are brightly colored enough to be confused with Lava-lamp interiors. Through April 22. (Dee/Glasoe, 529 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

LOUIS ROBERT
These rare and beautiful paper negatives and prints of portraits, architecture, and landscapes from an early (1810-82), little-known French photographic master are shown together here for the first and likely last time in New York. Through April 15. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

AMY STEINER
Steiner's light-boxed portraits of young women are informal, and all outdoors, with models posed in various grungy clothes and defiant expressions. One nonchalant wild child's mouth is so stained with berry juice that it almost guarantees a double take. Through April 22. (Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 243-3335.)

ANTHONY SUAU
Suau's smart photos of Russia in the decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain are worth at least a thousand and one words. In one picture, a dark sedan cruises across a wide avenue that recedes to an onion-domed building, as the car's passenger inspects the photographer. Through June 3. (Newseum, 580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays through Saturdays. 317-7503.)

WILLIAM SUTTLE
Suttle knows his territory, and, luckily for viewers, his territory is Atlantic City. "Blessings of Liberty" includes color views of sand sculptors and shell collectors, regulars, tourists, local entertainment, surf, and sky. Through April 22. (OK Harris, 383 W. Broadway. 431-3600.)

OLIVER WASOW
These digitally collaged landscapes look like science-fiction futures, while the interiors could be slides of installations in nearby galleries. Through April 29. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

JOCKO WEYLAND
This skate-punk Ezra Stoller shoots deadpan and lonely pictures of the "Radical Contours" of homemade skateboard ramps and half-pipes. More rabid fan than formalist, Weyland seems primarily interested in documenting this evidence of the devious minds and foolhardy guts of skaters. Mug shots of his heroes, rephotographed from old *Thrasher* and *Slap* magazines, show off some cool seventies haircuts but fail to resonate with the nonbeliever. Through April 15. (Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777) —**"Picturing Business: The Photography of *Fortune* Magazine."** Margaret Bourke-White got the ball rolling in *Fortune's* 1930 inaugural issue with a photo-essay on a hog-processing plant. Her elegant black-and-white, Machine Age patterns avoid outright gore, but we wind up staring down the slope of a staggeringly vast mountain of pig dust. Of course Walker Evans is the star here, not only because his rare, unpublished pictures dominate the show (the luminous color shots from moving trains are uncharacteristically spontaneous, and a dead-on view of modern life) but because his position as special photography editor for the magazine allowed him to involve the likes of Robert Frank, whose bemused series on commuting fat cats was decidedly not capitalistic propaganda. Through May 14. ♦ **Gary Schneider.** Through April 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

CHUCK CLOSE
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through April 22.

DANIELLE EPSTEIN
Robin Rice, 325 W. 11th St. 366-6660.
Through May 20.

DANNY LYON
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 750-7070.
Through April 22.

DAVID PLOWDEN / ZEKE BERMAN
Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Both shows through April 29.

"SELF-PORTRAITS & PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK"
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through June 17.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum.

TABLES FOR TWO

CHICAMA
Chicama, 35 E. 18th St. (505-2233)—"This is your first time here?" Luis the waiter asks, with the sort of gleam in his eye one tries to steer clear of at family reunions. "Then we have a lot to talk about." After a gringo-friendly tour of the something-for-everybody menu (ceviche, blender drinks, suckling pig), Luis launches into a history of Chicama's extravagant post-NAFTA décor. In his recollection, the chef bought a seaside restaurant in Peru in order to reassemble it in the States. The truth is that Evan Cole, the owner of ABC Carpet and Home, where the restaurant is located, downed a large number of caipirinas one day, then had an entire Brazilian farmhouse shipped to his store. But Luis's heart is in the right place, and his story, like the restaurant, works.

All the over-the-top elements—the candelabras, the throw rugs hung from the roof beams, the fake-out window frames big enough for Zorro and his horse to leap through—didn't come together on the first go: Colina, the country-Italian place that Cole tried last year at this address, with a nearly identical décor, bombed. Cole then hired a new chef, Douglas Rodriguez, who was the fuse behind Patria's pan-Latin fusion formula, and things fell into place. The menu retains a couple of overly clever Patria-style inventions—Rodriguez tries to pass off some Russian-dressing-like goo on the lobster ceviche as a "lobster reduction, olive-oil emulsion." But, in general, he downplays such impulses in favor of fresh, strong flavors: the *chupe de Chicama*, a seafood chowder with a pungent turmeric broth, is addictively spicy, and the "adobo-rubbed" rib-eye steak comes fully loaded with the brawny chili paste, a sort of Incan alternative to the guilty pleasure of A.1.

The fish-and-seafood ceviches, which bring in the happy-hour hordes, won't take you back to your South American vacation—that trick is performed by the traditional Peruvian duck ceviche, in orange and lime, served with crisps of duck-liver pâté. The point of the place is not authenticity but friendly, New World disorder: the international crowd is loud, well lubricated, eager to mingle. After admitting that he had run out of the recommended wine, the Ribera del Duero, the sommelier said, "I'll save you a bottle for next time, and you and I will drink it."(Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$39.)

—*Kevin Conley*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"La Bohème," with Leontina Vaduva, Ainhoa Arteta, Luis Lima, and Simon Keenlyside; conducted by Marco Armiliato. (April 5 and April 8 at 8.) ♦ With Emily Pulley instead of Ms. Arteta. (April 11 at 8.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Youngok Shin, Frank Lopardo, and Kim Josephson; Nello Santi. (April 6, April 8, and April 10 at 8.) ♦ **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Theodora Hanslowe, Michael Schade, Russell Braun, Paul Plishka, and Vladimir Ognovenko; Bruno Campanella. (April 7 at 8.) ♦ **"Pelléas et Mélisande,"** with Dawn Upshaw, Nadine Denize, Dwayne Croft, and Willard White; James Levine. (April 8 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"DER JASAGER"
Kurt Weill composed this thirty-five-minute opera in 1930, to a text by Bertolt Brecht, as an adventurous vehicle for school-aged performers. Its libretto is derived from a fifteenth-century Noh drama, "Taniko," whose inherent criticism of exploitative social mores appealed greatly to Brecht and Weill, with their Marxist leanings. The Japan Society has had the happy inspiration to stage both works on the same program—first the Noh drama, performed (in Japanese) by the dramatic troupe Nohgaku-za (whose twenty-eight members, directed by Kanze Hideo, are joined by the distinguished Noh actors Umekawa Rokuro and Hosho Kan), then the opera (in an English translation), conducted by Julius Rudel and featuring mezzo-soprano Mimi Lerner and baritone David Malis. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. April 5-7 at 7:30 and April 8 at 2 and 7:30.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
April 6 at 7:30 and April 9 at 1:30: "La Clemenza di Tito." ♦ April 7 at 8: "Carmen." ♦ April 8 at 1:30: Virgil Thomson's "The Mother of Us All," spotlighting soprano Lauren Flanigan in the role of Susan B. Anthony. ♦ April 8 at 8: "Tosca." ♦ April 9 at 1:30 and April 11 at 7:30: Opening performances of Rameau's *comédie lyrique* "Platée," in a production (directed and choreographed by Mark Morris) that originated at the 1997 Edinburgh Festival and has gone through intermediate stagings at London's Royal Opera (in temporary residence at the Barbican) and the Berkeley Early Music Festival. The cast includes sopranos Christine Brandes and Amy Burton and tenor Jean-Paul Fouchécourt. Daniel Beckwith conducts. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

OPERAWORKS
The company is presenting several operas in repertory (all fully, if modestly, staged, and accompanied by synthesizer). April 6 and April 8: "The Seagull," by Thomas Pasatieri (after Chekhov's play). ♦ April 7: Walton's "Façade," Peter Maxwell Davies's "Fool's Fanfare," and Holst's "Sāvitri." (Raw Space Theatre, 529 W. 42nd St. Evenings at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-9531.)

FOLKOPERAN
This Stockholm-based troupe, which presents standard operas in pared-down productions, offers "Carmen," performed in Swedish (with English surtitles). (BAM's Harvey—formerly the Majestic—Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 11 at 7:30. Through April 16.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER
Presenting Kurt Weill's operetta "Der Kuhhandel," fully staged and offered in a new English version. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. April 11 at 8. Through April 15.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur conducts Bach's "St. John Passion," with tenor Peter Schreier in the role of the Evangelist, baritone Håkan Hagegård as Christus, and bass Arizeder Urreiztieta as Pilate. Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, Mr. Schreier, and baritone Siegfried Lorenz sing the arias; the American Boychoir and the men of the Westminster Symphonic Choir handle the demanding choral parts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 6-8 at 8 and April 11 at 7:30.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY
Seiji Ozawa conducts Berlioz's "Roman Carnival Overture," Dutilleux's Symphony No. 2 ("Le Double"), and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 (featuring Nelson Freire). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 5-6 at 8.)

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG CHOIR
Erwin Ortner directs the Viennese ensemble in Machaut's "Messe de Nostre Dame," Xenakis's "Nuits," and Messiaen's "Cinq Rechants," in a concert that also includes a performance by pianist Maurizio Pollini of Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit" and excerpts from Debussy's Préludes (Book One). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. April 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 247-7800.)

VIRGIN CONSORT
Kyler Brown directs Buxtehude's "Missa Brevis," Bach's motet "Komm, Jesu Komm," Gregorio Allegri's "Miserere Mei, Deus," and Domenico Scarlatti's "Stabat Mater." (Church of St. Jean Baptiste, Lexington Ave. at 76th St. April 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 570-2130.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY
Itzhak Perlman takes up the guest conductor's baton to lead an all-Beethoven program comprising the "Egmont" Overture, the Triple Concerto, and the Symphony No. 7. The soloists in the concerto are the members of the Perlman/Nikkanen/Bailey Trio, whose representatives make a habit of protesting that the ensemble wants to be embraced for its own merits rather than ride onto concert stages on the coattails of its pianist's illustrious father. Such a pity for them, therefore, that fate should cruelly yoke them here to Papa—which seems to happen quite a lot. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 8 at 8 and April 9 at 2.)

TRINITY CHOIR AND REBEL
Owen Burdick directs the chorus and the period-instrument players in Bach's B-Minor Mass. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873. April 9 at 3.)

AMSTERDAM BAROQUE ORCHESTRA AND CHOIR
In 1750, an obituary of Johann Sebastian Bach mentioned that he had composed five Passion settings—that is, musical elaborations of the story of the death of Jesus as related through the Gospels. Two of these settings, based on the Gospels of Matthew and John, are widely celebrated; the latter occupies the New York Philharmonic this week. His other Passion settings have either disappeared or are wrapped in greater mystery. His "St. Luke Passion" is generally written off as inauthentic; though the manuscript is in his hand, he seems to have been merely copying out a work that was almost entirely by somebody else. His "St. Mark Passion" certainly did exist—it was premièred in 1731, in Leipzig—but it survives through its libretto alone. It has been widely maintained that, in creating that work, Bach may have simply retrofitted the Passion text to music he had composed earlier for other occasions, a process he often used and one that the organist and conductor Ton Koopman has employed in creating his speculative edition of what Bach's "St. Mark Passion" might have sounded like. In this concert, Koopman directs his realization from the keyboard, with soloists Deborah York (soprano), Annette Markert (mezzo-soprano), Max Ciolek and Paul Agnew (tenors), and Peter Kooy and Klaus Mertens (basses). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. April 9 at 4. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.)

RECITALS

SHAPES AND SOUNDS
The Kitchen hosts an installation of sound-sculptures by Ferdinand Försch, who founded Hamburg's KlangHaus, in 1997, as an experimental forum for interdisciplinary collaborations and whose own sound-and-sculpture conceptions are intriguingly documented on the recently released CD "4 Cage," on the Artelier Music label. Visitors may inspect the installation on April 5-6, from 2 to 6 (no tickets necessary). In addition, Mr. Försch is featured in a pair of live performances. April 7 at 8: Försch is joined by eKHo (his KlangHaus orchestra). ♦ April 8 at 8: Försch and eKHo join forces with instrument inventor Ken Butler (who creates musical golf clubs and hockey sticks) and Raphael Mostel (of Tibetan-singing-bowl fame). (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. For tickets to the live performances, call 255-5793.)

SCHNITTKE CELEBRATION
On April 5, the Lyric Chamber Music Society's tribute to the late composer Alfred Schnittke concludes with a roundtable discussion (at 6) by several of his musician colleagues (including the conductor Kurt Masur and the cellist Alexander Ivashkin) and a concert (at 8) in which the Moscow String Quartet and pianist Tigran Alikhanov perform his "Canon in Memory of Igor Stravinsky," "Moz-Art," String Quartet No. 2, and Piano Quintet. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.)

AMERICAN STRING QUARTET
The ensemble plays two quartets by Beethoven—in D Major (Op. 18, No. 3) and in C-Sharp Minor (Op. 131)—in addition to Irving Fine's Quartet for Strings. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. April 5 at 8.)

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MIRÓ STRING QUARTET
This fine young foursome offers Schubert's Quartet in A Minor (D. 804, the "Rosamunde"), Maurice Gardner's Quartet No. 4, and Dvořák's String Quintet in E-Flat Major (Op. 97, with violist Scott Lee assisting). (Alice Tully Hall. April 5 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

"APPALACHIAN JOURNEY"
Cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Mark O'Connor, and double-bassist Edgar Meyer offer a classical-meets-folk follow-up to their recent "Appalachian Waltz" project. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 5 at 8.)

MUSIC FROM THE VAIL VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL
For each of the past twelve summers, the Vail Valley Music Festival has unrolled in the Colorado Rockies, either at the mile-high Vilar Arts Center or in spectacularly situated private homes. In this concert, numerous musicians who have recently appeared at the festival reconvene in a more urban locale—less glamorous, perhaps, but at least New Yorkers can get there on the subway. The Borromeo String Quartet performs Beethoven's C-Major Quartet (Op. 59, No. 3); the modern-music group eighth blackbird plays John Musto's Divertimento; and violinist Chee-Yun and cellist Andrés Díaz join flutist Eugenia Zukerman (the festival's artistic director) for a trio by Stamitz and pianist André-Michel Schub for Schubert's Piano Trio in B-Flat Major. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. April 5 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
April 6 at 7:30 and April 8 at 2: Mark Peskanov plays Bach's G-Major Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin and is joined by pianist Doris Stevenson for works by Dvořák, Sibelius, and others. ♦ April 7 at 7:30 and April 9 at 4: Presenting Schubert's String Trio in B-Flat Major, Mendelssohn's String Quintet in B-Flat Major, and Tchaikovsky's string sextet, "Souvenir de Florence." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA
Performing Beethoven's String Trio in C Minor (Op. 9, No. 3); Dohnányi's Sextet for Winds, Strings, and Piano (Op. 37); and Brahms's A-Major Piano Quartet. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 6 at 8.)

SEQUENTIA
This Cologne-based medieval-music ensemble adapts its performing forces to the repertoire at hand, which it performs with both scholarly insight and dramatic verve. Its women's ensemble has recently made a strong impact in early-music circles through its interpretation of the music of the abbess Hildegarde von Bingen (whose complete works it has now finished recording for the Deutsche Harmonia Mundi label). Their male counterparts—a seven-member subgroup which is also known as Sons of Thunder—come to the fore in this year's spring tour, performing music by Hildegarde (written for the monks of Trier), as well as apocalyptic compositions by Notker the Stammerer (a ninth-century monk of the Swiss monastery of St. Gall) and pieces sung by pilgrims en route to Santiago de Compostela. (Church of St. Jean Baptiste, Lexington Ave. at 76th St. April 7 at 8. For information about tickets, call 570-2130.)

KELLER STRING QUARTET
This foursome was founded in 1986 by four graduates of the Franz Liszt Conservatory in Budapest, and only two years later walked away with the top prizes of two international competitions, including the highly respected Evian International String Quartet competition. In this concert, the group offers works close to their central European roots: Mozart's Quartet in G Major (K. 387), Bartók's Quartet No. 2, and Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 7 at 8.)

TON KOOPMAN
The Dutch organist offers an all-Bach program, including the Prelude and Fugue in C Minor (BWV 549) and the G-Major Fantasia (BWV 572). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. April 8 at 8. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.)

GUARNERI QUARTET
The foursome plays string quartets by Mozart (in D Major, K. 499), Brahms (in B-Flat Major, Op. 67), and Mendelssohn (in E-Flat Major, Op. 12). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 8 at 8.)

FOUR NATIONS ENSEMBLE
The period-instrument group plays courtly music from Baroque France (by Couperin, Rameau, and Marais), and the Music from China ensemble intersperses courtly music from earlier periods of Chinese history. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. April 8 at 8.)

CONTINUUM
The modern-music group offers works by the Puerto Rico-born composer Roberto Sierra, including his "Sephardic Songs." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 8 at 8:30.)

"SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND"
Violinist Lara St. John, cellist Amir Eldan, and pianist Ilan Rechtman offer music by Beethoven and Mr. Rechtman. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. April 9 at noon.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Presenting a program of numerous short pieces by Stravinsky. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 9 at 1 and 3.)

THE BOTTOM LINE
This is decidedly not the folk and jazz club in Greenwich Village, but rather an early-music ensemble comprising two violas da gamba, a theorbo, and a harpsichord. In its New York début recital, the group plays chamber works by the French Baroque viola-da-gamba virtuoso Marin Marais, his enigmatic teacher the Sieur de Ste.-Colombe, and his sometime rival Antoine Forqueray. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. April 9 at 5.)

RODNEY GILFRY
The baritone is joined by pianist Brian Zeger for a casual hour or so of patter and performance. (Joe's Pub, at the Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. April 9 at 6. For information about tickets, call 239-6200.)

PHILIP GLASS
Pianists Nelson Padgett and Eleanor Sandresky assist the composer in performances of his works. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 10 at 7.)

DMITRI BASHKIROV
The pianist performs short movements by Mozart and Debussy, nine of Liszt's transcriptions of Schubert songs, and Schumann's Intermezzos (Op. 4). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 11 at 7:30.)

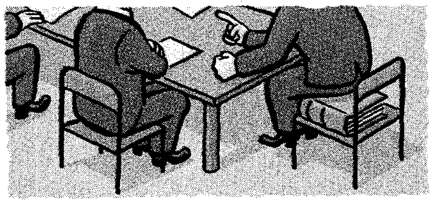
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
April 5 at 6:30: By actors Dana Ivey, Maria Tucci, and William Hurt, from the fiction of Saki, Kiana Davenport, and Richard Bausch. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ April 6 at 7: By Mark Doty and Marie Howe, from their poetry. (Bobst Library, New York University, 70 Washington Sq. S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 6 at 8: By poets Christine Hume and Heather McHugh. (Held Auditorium, Barnard College, Broadway at 116th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
April 10 at 7: Arts writer Edward Rubin, who recently returned from Cuba, gives an illustrated lecture on being an artist under Castro. (Wollman Auditorium, Albert Nerken School of Engineering, Cooper Union, 51 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ April 11 at 6:30: Documentarian Ric Burns, whose latest work is "New York: A Documentary Film," talks about his work. (Proshansky Auditorium, City University of New York Graduate Center, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For reservations, which are required, call 817-8215.) ♦ April 11 at 8: Authors Dominick Dunne, Liz Smith, and Joyce Carol Oates, whose latest novel, "Blonde," is a fictional account of the life of Norma Jean Baker, gather to discuss Marilyn Monroe and celebrity. (Rockefeller University, York Ave. at 66th St. For information about tickets, call 996-1100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

The Business of Literature



Business has always looked to the plots and characters of great literature for tips on how to dominate the boardroom. In his amusing new book, **WHAT WOULD MACHIAVELLI DO?** (HarperBusiness), Stanley Bing brings "The Prince" into the present with tales of such bosses as IBM's Lou Gerstner, Sunbeam's Al Dunlap, and many others "who five hundred years ago would have been wearing lace and silly garters." But the popularity of "The Prince" has devalued its contents; if you are mining Machiavelli for ways to get the upper hand, you can be certain that your nemesis is, too. If you want to stay ahead of the competition, you have to broaden your reading.

The Shakespearean canon, filled with leaders both adroit and inept, has plenty to say about administrative greatness. In **POWER PLAYS** (Simon and Schuster), John O. Whitney and Tina Packer blame Hamlet's inaction on poor "external decision models" and ineffective attempts at "straddle strategy." Their conclusion? "To Be or Not to Be: It's Up to You."

At a less rarified level, Thomas and Gloria Gilbert Mayer's **GOLDILOCKS ON MANAGEMENT** critiques the stratagems of twenty-seven fairy-tale characters, reproving Rumplestiltskin for his "unrealistic performance expectations" and upbraiding the Little Match Girl for her unproductive business plan. **NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK** (Prentice Hall Press) taps an even more unlikely source, analyzing the films of W. C. Fields as examples of teamwork, budgeting, negotiation, and delegation. Written by the comedian's grandson, Ronald Fields, the book even draws on Fields's offscreen life, in which he was a not entirely serious inventor whose creations included the Necktie Soup Set, an assortment of ties colored to match any soup that might spill on them. Marvelling at this improvisational optimism, the author advises that all entrepreneurs learn to turn "misses into hits."

—*Leo Carey*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Books.
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Missing These Reads Would Be a Crime

THE PATIENT

by Michael Palmer

In his newest medical thriller, Michael Palmer introduces a tiny new surgical robot on the brink of revolutionizing neurosurgery. After it attracts the unwanted attention of a master assassin with a deadly brain tumor, gifted neurosurgeon Jessie Copeland tackles the toughest operation of her career—foiling an evil plan that threatens hundreds of innocent lives, including her own. (Bantam)

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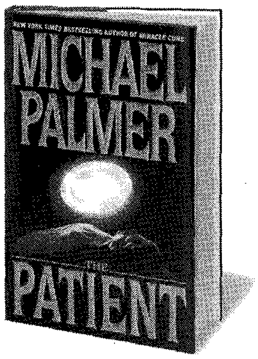

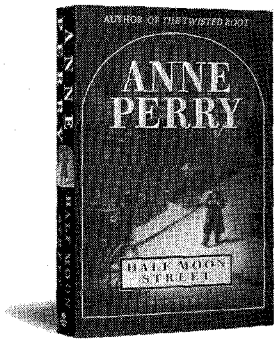

HALF MOON STREET

by Anne Perry

Deadly intrigue and dangerous secrets abound in Anne Perry's newest suspenseful Victorian novel. When a murdered corpse is discovered chained and floating in a boat on the Thames, relentless police inspector Thomas Pitt returns to unravel the mystery and uncovers a shocking crime of passion. (Ballantine Books)

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HUGGER MUGGER

by Robert B. Parker

Robert B. Parker's latest book welcomes back Boston P.I. Spenser, retained to solve a murder involving a hired gun preying on racehorses in the deep South. When his employer is suddenly killed, Spenser must watch his own back, as well as deal with a big dose of Southern resentment, as he tries to save a young thoroughbred and wrap up the case. (Putnam)

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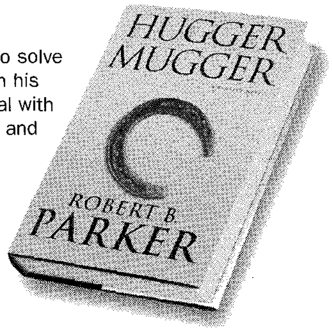

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MOVIES OPENING

BLACK AND WHITE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 5.

CRANE WORLD
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening April 7. (The Screening Room.)

EAST-WEST
Régis Wargnier directs this historical drama about a Russian doctor and his French wife (Sandrine Bonnaire), who emigrate to Odessa after the Second World War. In French and Russian. Opening April 7.

JOE GOULD'S SECRET
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 7.

ME MYSELF I
An Australian comedy about a thirtysomething reporter (Rachel Griffiths) who meets another version of herself, one who married her boyfriend thirteen years before. Opening April 7.

RETURN TO ME
David Duchovny and Minnie Driver fall in love, only to discover that she is the recipient of his late wife's heart. Opening April 7.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT
William Friedkin directs this military courtroom drama, with Tommy Lee Jones and Samuel L. Jackson. Opening April 7.

SOUTHPAW
A documentary about Francis Barrett, the Irish Gypsy who boxed in the 1996 Olympics. Directed by Liam McGrath. Opening April 7.

THIS IS NOT AN EXIT
Bret Easton Ellis, the author of "American Psycho" and "Less Than Zero," is the subject of this documentary by Gerald Fox. Opening April 7. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.

BEYOND THE MAT
Pro wrestling, America's new national pastime, gets a good thrashing in this documentary by Barry Blaustein. His voice-over narration is pitifully cliché-ridden, but what he captures on camera and records in interviews is a bloody eye-opener. The film follows a trio of wrestlers—Terry Funk, a well-respected thirty-year veteran, Jack (Jake the Snake) Roberts, a journeyman in rapid decline, and Mick (Mankind) Foley, a sweet-natured superstar with a loving family—through a tour of arenas and barns across the country. The candid portraits of events both inside the ring (the brutal, Thunderdome-like fight matches) and outside (the fearful, emotionally volatile family lives) call into question the generally accepted belief that wrestling is pure theatre. What emerges is profiles of men whose lives are wracked with pain (there's more stitching done here than at a Levi's factory) and an uncomfortable feeling that some of them have become crowd-pleasing junkies, hooked on the need to draw blood, even if it's their own.—*Bruce Diones* (Union Square.)

BOILER ROOM
A sensationally entertaining melodrama about young outer-borough louts in Canali suits who sell stocks of dubious value from a fly-by-night brokerage firm. Like "Wall Street" before it, this movie—written and directed by the twenty-seven-year-old Ben Younger—might be described as an ambivalent love letter to the outrageous hustle and greed of the great American bull market. Younger wants us to enjoy the young men's gleeful exhibitionism and powers of persuasion. At the same time, he depicts the brokers' triumphs as a low-life rampage. Amused, clear-sighted, and objective, "Boiler Room" has been made without false piety or hypocrisy. It stars Giovanni Ribisi as a young man lured into the brokerage house, and Ron Rifkin, in a brilliant performance, as his disapproving, federal-judge father. Among the young actors who play brokers, Ben Affleck, Vin Diesel, and Nicky Katt stand out.—*David Denby* (3/13/00) (Cinema II, Kips Bay Theatre, and State.)

BREATHLESS
Jean-Luc Godard's first feature (1959)—a witty, romantic, innovative chase picture with the twenty-six-year-old Jean-Paul Belmondo as a Parisian hood, and Jean Seberg as the American girl who casually lives with him and just as casually turns him in to the police when he becomes an inconvenience. Godard saw something in the cheap American gangster movies of his youth which French movies lacked; he poeticized it and made it so modern (via fast jump-cutting) that he, in turn, became the key influence on American movies in the sixties. Here, he brought together disharmonious elements—irony and slapstick and defeat—and placed the psychological effects of moviegoing into the movie itself. (His hero was probably the first to imitate Bogart.) The film is light and playful and off-the-cuff, even a little silly. Yet the giddy, gauche characters who don't give a damn—the hood who steals a car, kills a highway patrolman, and chases after some money that is owed him for past thefts so he and his impervious, passively butch girl can get to Italy—are not only familiar in an exciting, revealing way, they are terribly attractive.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; April 7-13.)

CRANE WORLD
Pablo Trapero's début feature is a reminder of how quiet films can be. Shot in black-and-white and set in Argentina, the picture presents us with the life of Rulo (Luis Margani), a potbellied, jovial, middle-aged construction worker. We follow along as he eats chicken, washes his car, flirts with the woman in the sandwich shop, sleeps in front of the television, and looks for a job as a crane operator. For some moviegoers, this might be as exciting as watching someone floss his teeth, but more patient ones will be captivated by this straightforward homage to Italian neorealism. What gives the movie its ballast is Rulo's past glory; he was a bass player in a band with one hit single. His minor celebrity confers a lingering aura of youth and vitality which draws others to him. Many of the scenes sparkle with cultural detail, but the film never veers from ordinary events into conflict or crisis. We keep waiting for Rulo's stolid integrity to be tested, but it never is; instead, we are left with a celluloid portrait that has all the harsh beauty and inscrutability of a Walker Evans photograph. In Spanish.—*Michael Agger* (The Screening Room.)

ERIN BROCKOVICH
This upbeat, inspirational melodrama, based on a true story and directed by Steven Soderbergh, is brought to life by a star on a heavenly rampage. Julia Roberts swings into rooms, ablaze with indignation, her breasts bulging out of her skimpy tops, and rants at the people gaping at her. She's a moral heroine with no sense of propriety—Ralph Nader crossed with Jesse Ventura. Like "A Civil Action" and "The Insider," the movie exposes corporate malfeasance—in this case, that of Pacific Gas & Electric, which for years dumped a lethal chemical called Chromium 6 at its plant in Hinkley, California; the families who lived nearby were diagnosed with multiple cancers. Brockovich, a legal secretary without formal training, leads the charge against the utility corporation, supported by a phlegmatic middle-aged lawyer (Albert Finney) and by her lover (Aaron Eckhart), a hippie-biker dreamboat, bearded but beerless, who takes care of Erin's children while she's out haranguing everybody. Soderbergh's direction goes straight as an arrow, and the movie, though obvious, crude, and even bullying, is raffishly enjoyable and touching.—*D.D.* (3/27/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE FILTH AND THE FURY
A new documentary about the Sex Pistols by Julien Temple, who has already made "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle." Whether or not the band is an inexhaustible topic remains open to debate. The sight of a sullen and raw-skinned Sid Vicious sitting on a park bench and explaining how good-looking he is will not, perhaps, bear repeated viewings. The film wants Britain to be as reckless and unpredictable as its subject, but this requires a little twisting of the evidence: Britain in the mid-nineteen-seventies was bored and bungling, and, despite what Temple's riotous montage of unrest might suggest, the place was never on the verge of revolution—nothing beyond the musical, at any rate. The surviving band members (including lead singer Johnny Rotten) are filmed in silhouette, as if they were ex-criminals in the Witness Protection Program; this is known as flattery. Still, it is always diverting to watch harmlessly horrible people taking out their frustrations on one another—especially when the mask slips and they temporarily forget to be horrible. The climax of the picture is all anticlimax. Uprooted from home territory, the Sex Pistols withered in the alien soil of America. Their antics have aged badly; how odd, then, that their fistful of hits sound more essential and purgative than ever.—*Anthony Lane* (4/3/00) (Film Forum.)

FINAL DESTINATION
Two alumni of "The X-Files," writer Glen Morgan and director James Wong, make the leap to the big screen and come up with one of the most enjoyable scarefests in years. While boarding an airplane, a high-school student (Devon Sawa) has a premonition that the plane will crash—a hunch later proved explosively correct. He saves the lives of a group of fellow-students, but death won't be cheated, and supernatural forces begin to menace the survivors, one by one. Wong bathes each scene with deep shadows, and the creepy lighting gives the picture a ghastly, nightmarish feel. The "Omen"-like setup (a grisly death every fifteen minutes or so) rolls along like a fun-house ride, and the deaths themselves are designed with the fabulous complexity of Rube Goldberg contraptions. The film is clever enough not to get caught in its own mousetrap; there's a gleeful spirit to the frights delivered here, and the kicker of an ending leaves the audience with a perfect final scream.—*B.D.* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly.)

GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI
Part satire, part comic book, Jim Jarmusch's new film is set in a future that's one beat beyond the present and takes place in a generic cityscape called the Industrialized State. Forest Whitaker stars as a hulking, dangerous, yet curiously gentle samurai known as Ghost Dog. He follows the austere precepts of the samurai code but is also partial to gangsta rap and high-tech weaponry. His master is an Italian Mob underling who serves a family in hilarious decline: they operate out of the back of a Chinese restaurant and cannot make the rent on their social club. Jarmusch keeps the camera moving slowly, attending to details, and the rap soundtrack by RZA (of Wu-Tang Clan fame) gives the whole undertaking a fuguelike quality. When the movie becomes a showdown

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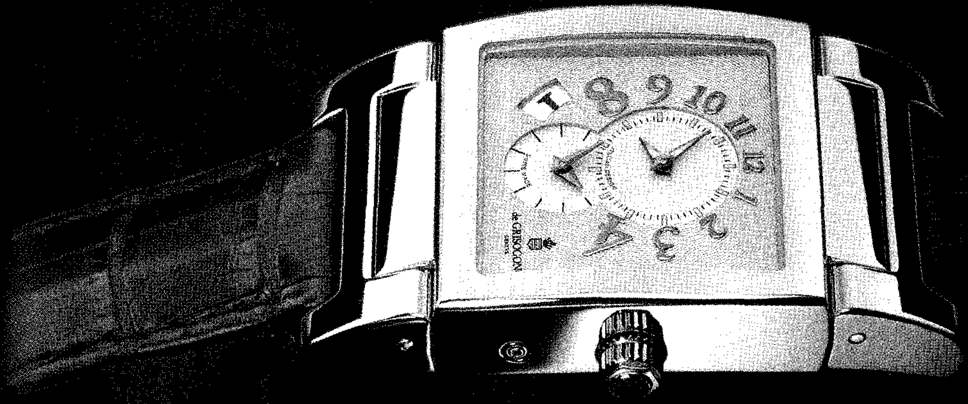
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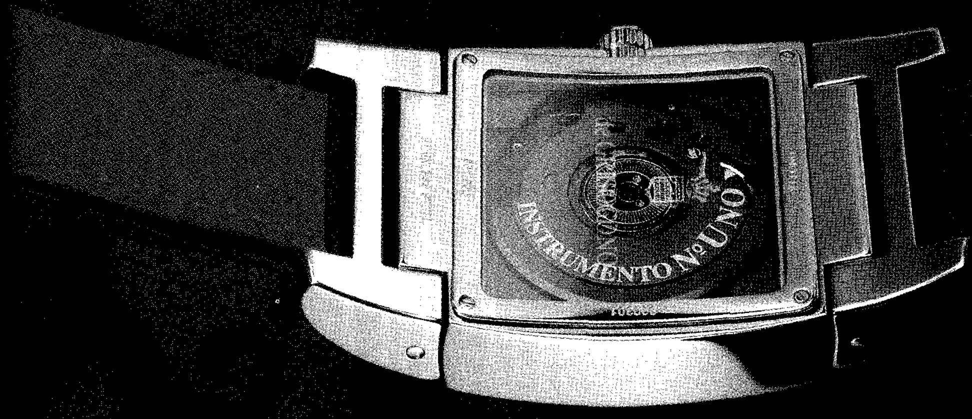
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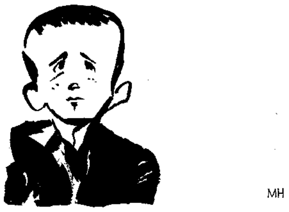
between two ancient codes—the samurai and *omertà*—Jarmusch playfully aligns the pretend violence of cartoons with the stylized violence of Hollywood, leading to an enigmatic ending that is thoroughly unnerving. It's like an elaborate joke without a punch line. The setup, though, is worth it, thanks to Whitaker's quiet, powerful performance; in Jarmusch's hands he becomes a beacon of purity in a collapsing world.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinema, and State.)

HIGH FIDELITY
A short, sharp movie from Stephen Frears, who may be trying to shake himself awake after the languors of his last film, "The Hi-Lo Country." The source is Nick Hornby's buoyant novel, which was set in North London, but the shift to Chicago feels easy, perhaps because difficulties with girls and a penchant for listing favorite pop songs are universal symptoms of male haplessness. John Cusack stars as Rob, who runs a ratty record store called Championship Vinyl; if anything, the records are more tightly packed in his apartment, which may be why his girlfriend Laura (Iben Hjejle) has just moved out. For most of the picture, they duck and weave, unable to decide whether to stay together; not much happens, and, like Laura, you want things to move on. Yet Frears keeps jump-starting the action with fast cuts, flashbacks, and a jolting current of loud music. (The end credits, which roll to a Stevie Wonder song, send you out on a high.) Why Frears made the film so dark and rain-drenched is something of a mystery; perhaps he was seeking a visual match for the glumness of perpetual adolescence. No love, the film ruefully suggests, will ever be as much fun as a good love song. Fortunately, Cusack and the rest of the cast—notably Jack Black, as a noxious compound of slob and snob—insist, like all good discophiles, on hearing both sides.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Cinema I, Criterion Center, Murray Hill, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)



A WEE LAD *Scottish director Lynne Ramsay auditioned more than a thousand children for the lead role in her film "Ratcatcher" before she chose William Eadie. His dark eyes and open, expressive face convey a quick, nervous intelligence, and his portrayal of an alienated kid growing up in a Glasgow tenement is pitch perfect. "Ratcatcher" will be screened this week at* MOMA *as part of the "New Directors/New Films" festival, a chance to see promising feature films that may go on to wider release.*

M
Fritz Lang's first sound film (1932) has visual excitement, pace, brilliance of surface, and feeling for detail. Above all, it has, caught in a manhunt, a small, fat man, sweating in uncomfortable clothes—the sexual psychopath who murders little girls—interpreted by Peter Lorre with a spark of genius. It is Lorre's triumph that he makes us understand the terrified, suffering human being who murders. The film is based on the case of the Düsseldorf murderer; the police, trying to track him down, disturbed the normal criminal activities of the city, and the underworld organized to find him, so that crime could go on as usual. Lang turns the movie into a melodramatic thriller by centering on this ironic chase—actually, on the two converging chases of the police and the underworld. The structure is so mechanical it's almost pulpy, and the film reaches for other easy effects—it's similar to "The Threepenny Opera" in its satirical use of beggars and criminals. But there's nothing facile about Lorre: trapped by the underworld, he screams, "I can't help myself!" Our identification with him as a psychopath is so complete it's hard to believe that while appearing before Fritz Lang's cameras in the daytime, he was, at night, acting as a comedian in a farce.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; April 8.)

MISSION TO MARS
The last two Martian sorties, courtesy of NASA, have been embarrassing failures, and so is Brian De Palma's first leap into outer space. The film involves two missions: one, led by Luke Graham (Don Cheadle), runs into trouble with an angry sandstorm, whereupon another crew—played by Tim Robbins, Connie Nielsen, Gary Sinise, and Jerry O'Connell—is dispatched to sort out the mess. What promised to be a semi-respectable missing-in-action flick suddenly turns into a hallucinogenic exploration of our earthly, mortal existence, and poor Gary Sinise, who did such sterling work in bringing his imperilled colleagues back to Earth in "Apollo 13," is now obliged to take permanent leave of his senses. The movie is weakly written, sluggishly paced, and performed without gusto; it also happens to be beautifully shot, but the elegance of the camera movements is the only evidence that there used to be intelligent life in Brian De Palma films.—*A.L.* (3/20/00) (Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

ROMEO MUST DIE
Thankfully, we are spared the spectacle of Jet Li whispering sonnets in the moonlight; this film goes nowhere near Shakespeare. It's a slick package of rap music and roundhouse kicks designed to establish Li, already a Hong Kong box-office phenomenon, as the Fred Astaire of fisticuffs. Adhering to a time-honored kung-fu-film tradition, the earnest dialogue and overloaded plot serve only as filler to be endured before the next fight sequence begins. (If you must know: the plot involves two gangs, one Asian, one black, who duke it out on the Oakland waterfront.) Li is a graceful, smooth, and creative performer; a scene in which he destroys five prison guards while blindfolded and suspended by one leg is jaw-dropping. In another, he uses black plastic pull-ties to neutralize a troop of thugs—who knew that hardware stores provided such terrific weaponry? Director Andrzej Bartkowiak adds an inspired touch by showing each of Li's death blows as a slow-motion color X-ray; the anatomically curious can count each vertebra as it is broken in half.—*M.A.* (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

WAKING THE DEAD
This earnest romantic movie is sombre and a little gummy, but it holds your attention and the actors gain your sympathy. In the early seventies, Fielding Pierce (Billy Crudup), a Harvard boy in search of a political career, falls in love with a humorlessly dedicated left-wing activist, Sarah Williams (Jennifer Connelly). When she's killed in a terrorist attack while helping refugees from Chile, he goes numb with grief. A decade later, he's running for Congress, still frozen and sad. In the midst of his campaign, he sees Sarah's ghost or her shadow—he definitely sees *something*—and falls apart. For some of us, Sarah was never really the right girl for Fielding, but he doesn't think so, and the movie is a decent attempt to plumb a romantic obsession. The soulful, dark-eyed Connelly is a little thick-tongued; she swallows some of her most important lines. But Crudup goes back and forth between deep reserve and a slightly hysterical emotionalism with impressive skill. Directed with almost too much sensitivity by Keith Gordon. Based on Scott Spencer's novel.—*D.D.* (3/27/00) (First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.)

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS
Matthew Perry, who is sometimes the only thing that keeps "Friends" on its toes, attempts yet another leap to the big screen. He plays a Montreal dentist whose next-door neighbor (Bruce Willis) turns out to be a hit man hiding from the Mob. Throw in a deep-voiced heavy (Michael Clarke Duncan) and a couple of fiercely disappointed wives (Rosanna Arquette and Natasha Henstridge), and soon everyone wants to kill somebody else. Perry and Willis—the scared and the smooth—are not a bad pairing, and Perry gets the chance for some jerky slapstick (he bounces off Clarke Duncan as if off a vast rubber wall), but the film is too hectic and scattershot to give the actors much room. Visually, this may be the dingiest film of the year so far, although Amanda Peet, in her role as a death-crazed dental assistant, cheers things up considerably. The director is Jonathan Lynn, who doesn't quite have the courage to carry off this black comedy; the mood of loving contentment which triumphs at the end feels like an insult.—*A.L.* (3/6/00) (Coronet Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, State, and Union Square.)

WINTER SLEEPERS
Tom Tykwer wrote and directed this film before his hit "Run Lola Run," and it shares a similar obsession with chance happenings and coincidence. Rene, a young outcast who has lost his short-term memory, steals a sports coupe on a whim. Travelling up an icy mountain road, he swerves to avoid a farmer's station wagon, plunges off an embankment, and walks away from the scene, forgetting everything. The farmer is not so lucky; his daughter is gravely injured. Uncovering the identity of the "other driver" propels the film and eventually connects Rene with three other twentysomethings in the German alpine village: Marco, a blank, womanizing ski instructor; Rebecca, a blond temptress; and Laura, a local nurse. Tywker displays mesmerizing skill with the camera—it zooms over mountaintops, slinks around corners, and spies from the ceiling. At surprising moments, the action spirals into an all-white screen, and whiteness becomes a recurring motif, a symbol of death and life. The stylistic brilliance is almost enough to distract you from the film's essential flatness. When played lightly, this kind of interconnected plot can build wonderful suspense, but when it's overplayed, as it is here, the story's greater resonance gets lost in all the machinations.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (11/22/99)
Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

AMERICAN BEAUTY (9/20/99)
Beekman, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, State, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.

BEAU TRAVAIL
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

BOYS DON'T CRY (10/18-25/99)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.

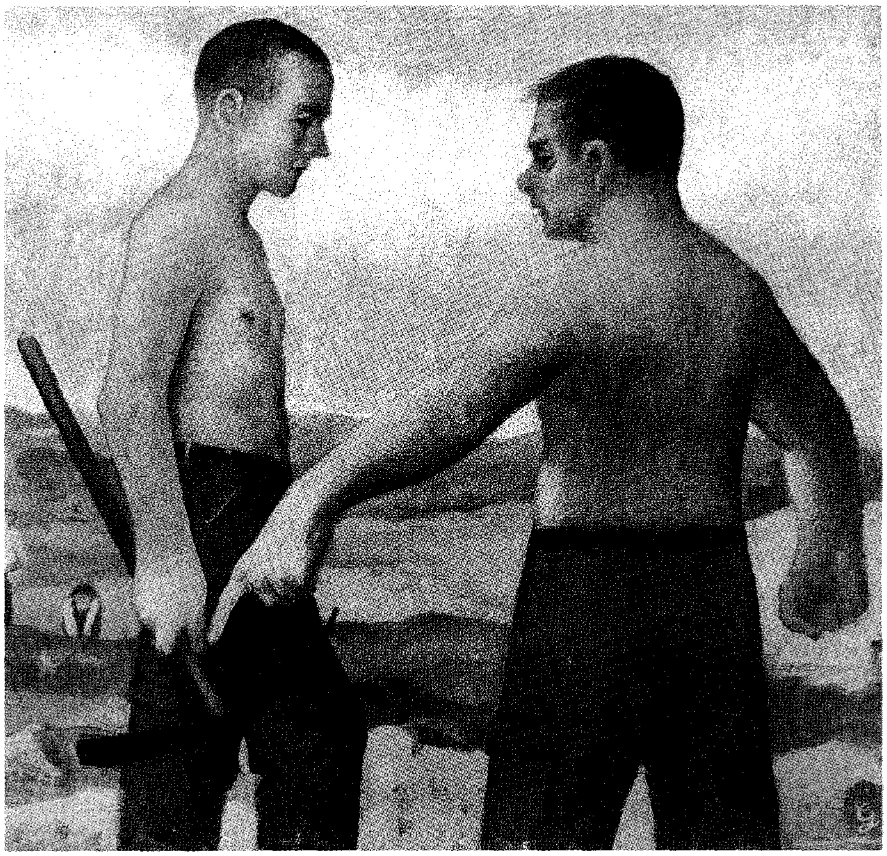
MARCELLUS HALL

THE CIDER HOUSE RULES (12/13/99)
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.
THE COLOR OF PARADISE
Quad Cinemas.
COTTON MARY
Paris and Union Square.
MIFUNE
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
NOT ONE LESS (2/21-28/00)
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
THE PRICE OF GLORY
Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.
THE ROAD TO EL DORADO
Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.
THE SKULLS
Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.
TOPSY-TURVY (12/27/99-1/3/00)
First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



"Beau Travail," a new film by French director Claire Denis, set in East Africa.

GERARD DUBOIS

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077) "Visions of Modernity: The Films of Fritz Lang." Restored prints of Lang's masterpieces, with an introduction by lecturer Tom Gunning. April 8 at 2: "M" (†). ♦ April 8 at 4:30: "You and Me" (1938). ♦ April 9 at 2: "Destiny" (1921). ♦ April 9 at 4: "The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse" (1933). ♦ April 8-9 at 6:30: "Sweet and Lowdown" (1999, Woody Allen).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—April 5 at 7:30 and April 8 at 5:30: "Papa's Song" (1999, Sander Francken; in Dutch). ♦ April 6 at 7 and 9:30: "Beyond Good and Evil" (1977, Liliana Cavani). ♦ Restored prints of Fritz Lang's films, shown in conjunction with the American Museum of the Moving Image. April 7 at 6: "Siegfried, Part I of Die Nibelungen" (1924). ♦ April 7 at 8:30: "Kriemhild's Revenge, Part II of Die Nibelungen" (1924). ♦ April 8 at 6: "Spione" (1928). ♦ April 8 at 9:30: "Die Spinnen" (1919). ♦ April 8 at 3:30 and 7:30 and April 9 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Divine Trash" (1998, Steve Yeager). ♦ April 9 at 7: "L'Age d'Or" (1930, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—April 5 at 7 and 9:30: "Fury" (1936, Fritz Lang; in German). ♦ April 6 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Thieves" (1996, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ April 7 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Diner" (1982, Barry Levinson). ♦ April 8 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fitzcarraldo" (1982, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ April 9 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Aguirre: The Wrath of God" (1972, Herzog; in German). ♦ April 10 at 4:30, 7, and 9: "The Edge" (1967, Robert Kramer). ♦ April 11 at 7:30: "Cabaret" (1972, Bob Fosse).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 6: The "Neo-Noir" festival. April 5-6: "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles) and "Odds Against Tomorrow" (1959, Robert Wise). ♦ April 7-13: "Breathless" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The "New Directors/New Films" festival. April 5 at 6 and April 6 at 9: "Human Resources" (1999, Laurent Cantet; in French). ♦ April 5 at 9 and April 6 at 6: "Our Song" (1999, Jim McKay). ♦ April 7 at 6 and April 8 at 9: "Jesus' Son" (1999, Alison Maclean). ♦ April 7 at 9 and April 9 at 3:30: "Ratcatcher" (1999, Lynne Ramsay). ♦ April 8 at 12:30 and April 9 at 6:30: "Sound and Fury" (1999, Josh Aronson and Roger Weisberg). ♦ April 8 at 3 and April 9 at 9: "Herod's Law" (1999, Luis Estrada; in Spanish). ♦ April 8 at 6 and April 9 at 12:30: Three short films: "Jacaranda" (1999, Francisco Velasquez), "Cusp" (1999, Ruth Sergel), and "Five Feet High and Rising" (1999, Peter Sollett).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St., at Ave. A. (254-3300)—April 5-11: "The Lifestyle" (2000, David Schisgall).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—The films of James Toback. April 5: "Bugsy" (1991, Barry Levinson; written by Toback). ♦ April 6: "Two Girls and a Guy" (1998). ♦ April 7-8 at midnight: "The Stendahl Syndrome" (1996, Darlo Argento; in Italian). ♦ April 7-13: "Crane World" (†).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway (864-1414)—Through April 25: A retrospective of the films of John Waters and Pedro Almodóvar. April 11 at 7: "Live Flesh" (1997, Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ April 11 at 9: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (1988, Almodóvar).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—"The Art of Film Titles." April 7 at 2: "Shorts 1," animated and experimental film titles. ♦ April 7 at 4: "Shorts 2." ♦ April 7 at 6: "Panel: The Moderns," a discussion with established film-title designers. ♦ April 7 at 8:15: "Titles Then," a discussion of title design from 1950 to 1980. ♦ April 8 at 4:15: "Shorts 2." ♦ April 8 at 6: "Panel: The Contemporaries," a discussion with up-and-coming film-title designers. ♦ April 8 at 8:15: "Titles Now," a discussion of title design from 1980 to the present.

mingo, wing and ed lee
surfers/restaurateurs

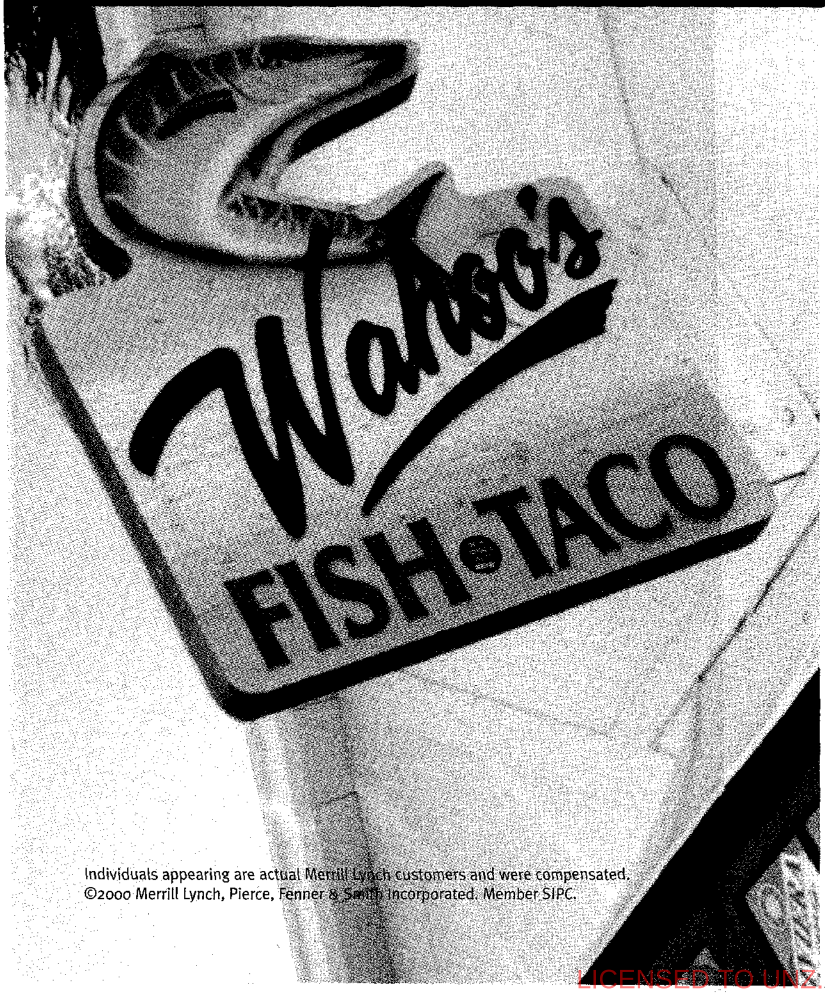
mingo: after the first wahoo's caught on, we wanted to open some new restaurants. but nobody would take a chance on these surfer guys.

ed: dom and merrill said we do see it down the road, so we'll jump in and partner with you guys.

wing: it's not just about lending us money. dom's put us together with people in our industry to share ideas with and with the right people at merrill to help us grow the business.

wing: he did make one questionable decision, though. he took up golf instead of surfing.

"they saw past the shorts and t-shirts"



dom alvarez
duffer/financial consultant

dom: don't let the surfer dude thing fool you. these guys are good businessmen.

they've gone from 1 restaurant to 13. we put together a plan for their personal finances, too, and they've gone from, well... interesting... to a place where they've all got healthy retirement plans.

i think their dad, who's also a client, must be happiest of all. he no longer has to use his house as collateral on their loans.

be bullish **Merrill Lynch**

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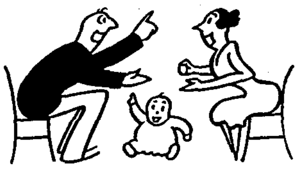
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

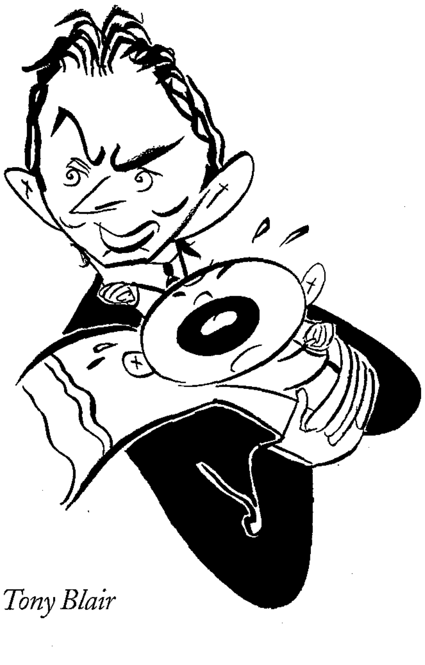
COMMENT
AND BABY MAKES A THIRD WAY



When Prime Minister Tony Blair announced last year that he was to be a father for the fourth time, reaction was mixed. British newspaper editors scratched their heads and did the math; if the baby was due on May 24, 2000, when had it been conceived? The assumption was that the deed must have occurred abroad, as if only the warmth and wine of Tuscany could rouse a British male to such a resounding effort. More mischievous theorists claimed that Cherie Blair, at the age of forty-five, had been impregnated while staying with the royal family at Balmoral, an act of almost revolutionary valor. Whatever the case, the next general election was as good as won. The hopes of the Conservative opposition, already fragile, were now in ruins, although one junior aide was seen making a spirited attempt to page King Herod.

For the Blairs, there seemed to be no downside. We live in an era when any political proposal—whether it concerns gun control, education, or drug abuse—can be instantly, if not logically, armor-plated with a reference to "our children" or "our children's children." The only issue that is beyond the reach of the kiddie clause is campaign-finance reform, although grownups don't get that one, either. But now, as Mrs. Blair swells radiantly toward launch day, we have a problem. Forget our children's children; how about our children's diaper rash? Like, *now.* It's three o'clock in the morning for me, *too,* you know. So you can run a country with your eyes closed, but you can't remember to boil the *kettle*?

In short, Mr. Blair must decide: should he go to work in a clean suit, or stay at home with a Nile delta of vomit moistening his shoulder blades? The delivery itself is no longer open to debate; the days when Prince Philip went off to play squash while the Queen was giving birth seem Jurassically distant, and Mr. Blair's duties on May 24th are unambiguous. You cannot storm the national scene with a party entitled New Labour and then, when the waters break, take one look and head for the pub. It's what happens next that matters, and the rights and wrongs of paternity leave have split Britain down the middle. On one side are not just the diehards and the little-women brigade—those whom Mr. Blair would call "the forces of conservatism"—but also those who simply cannot afford to take time off. On the other side is Cherie Blair, tapping her foot and threatening to send Tony to bed with no TV.



Tony Blair

It's no contest. Mrs. Blair is a barrister of formidable reputation, whose fees leave the Prime Minister's salary whimpering in the corner. So firm are her feelings on joint parental duties that she has even gone public. Addressing a forum on employment rights, she approved the example set by Paavo Lipponen, the Prime Minister of Finland, who recently renounced power for six days to care for his new daughter, Emilia. "If anything major had happened, I would have had to go back to work," he said. Leaving aside all the major happenings that could hit Finland in the average week, one wonders if Mrs. Blair was wise to draw this particular parallel; opponents of paternity leave can now paint it as a typical European scam—just what you would expect from those work-shy, welfare-state milksops over the water.

Last week, however, support arrived from a kindred quarter. Bill Clinton declared that he, too, would love to be a father again, although whether this represents a visionary ideal or a post-Presidential

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

game plan is not entirely clear. Mr. Clinton also suggested that, in Mr. Blair's place, he would "work it out." And there the matter rests. Legislation alone will not solve it; British law, like its American equivalent, allows both parents to take twelve weeks' unpaid leave, but, even if you have the cash, the age-old stigma of the slacker is unlikely to wash away, and colleagues may never again trust you as the man—or the woman—for the job. Blair Junior, meanwhile, will probably sleep through the whole thing; you could argue that the Prime Minister's presence at home will be more urgently needed one year on, when little angel face has turned into Osama Bin Laden with oatmeal.

There is, of course, a Third Way, which runs as follows: shortly before the birth of your fourth child, accompany your wife to the Academy Awards and make sure that you collect an honorary Oscar. This will not feel like work, but, nevertheless, it *is* work, and it will set a relaxing tone for all that follows. If only Tony Blair, like Warren Beatty, had spent forty years attending devoutly to the needs of babes, he would know exactly what to do.

—*Anthony Lane*

DEPT. OF FREE LOVE
HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF SOME SEXY SNAPSHOTS

Is there in the English language a more cheering, endearing, hope-inducing word, pithy and punchy, a scant five letters, barely two syllables, ten Scrabble points, than "naked"? Which is also to ask, is there—hate to be crude about this, but—a word more purely ripe with commercial possibilities? ("Sex" is by no means such a word; far too complicated. Back to "naked": Would Norman Mailer be where he is today if he'd called his first novel "The Fully Clothed and the Dead"?) Not that Mark Helfrich, a forty-seven-year-old professional film editor and amateur photographer who lives in Los Angeles, was thinking merely mercenary thoughts one particular day seven years ago while perusing a box of old black-and-white and color prints—mostly, naked pictures of his ex-girlfriends. Mainly, he was recalling how happy he'd been when he took the photographs and how excellent his subjects looked naked. It occurred to him that a carefully chosen portfolio would make an interesting book, and about a nanosecond later the thought occurred that sales probably wouldn't suffer if its title was "Naked Pictures of My Ex-Girlfriends." (As opposed to, say, "My Life in Linoleum" or "Frog Raising for Pleasure and Profit.")

According to Mr. Helfrich, "Naked Pictures of My Ex-Girlfriends" is "not a definitive compendium," just a photo-memoir of thirty-two women he got to know during a decade of rabbity concupiscence—the book's subtitle is "Romance in the 70's"—who, when tracked down twenty or thirty years later, obligingly signed releases that said, in effect, "Sure, go right ahead. It's only me naked." Rounding up the releases took seven years, and the book is finally being published next week. The result isn't a collection of arty nudes, nor does it fit the shrink-wrapped-on-the-newsstand definition of pornography, nor is it stupid, the way the *Cosmo*-for-guys beer-and-babes-and-accessories magazines are. The accompanying text, in white hand-lettering against a black background, is neither pre-feminist nor post-feminist—just the candid testimony of a guy handy with a Nikon in the twilight of the pre-H.I.V. era, a fellow who without sounding boastful makes clear that he never flagged in his willingness to get laid. ("It was fun. It was like playing a game. It was like living Antonioni's 'Blow-Up.' Sometimes it was foreplay . . .")

"I think for the people who look at this book the pictures are voyeuristic, because you're looking at somebody else's girlfriends," Mr. Helfrich said the other day during a phone conversation. "By the same token, I feel that other men can recognize one or two of their girlfriends in the stories or shots. I wanted the photographs to look like a boyfriend took them. When editing, I looked for that twinkle in the eye that took me to a certain intimate setting. With apologies to *Playboy*, I think these really are the girls next door. I'm a fan of *Playboy*. I'm a lifetime subscriber."

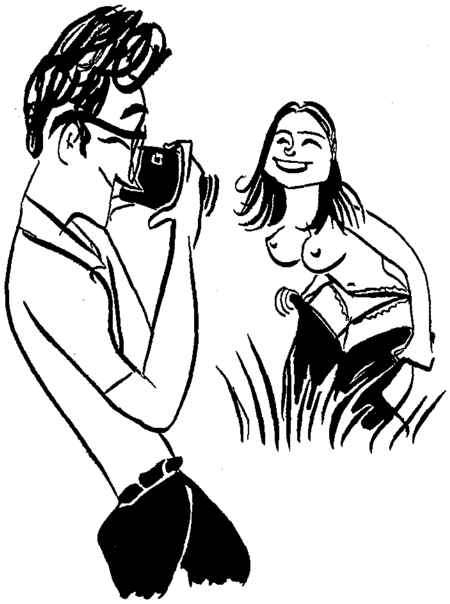
And, just as orthodox *Playboy* philosophers have always insisted, it's the writing, not the pictures, that really counts:

Jill, a long-haired brunette, sitting upright, legs crossed, filing her nails, with a "Do Not Disturb" sign from a Holiday Inn suspended from her left nipple: "About once a month I'd get together with my friend from out of state, Jill. We'd meet at the airport and make a beeline for the nearest bed. Passionately, we'd rip each other's clothes off and become a couple of hyperactive love-monkeys."

Cynthia: "Cynthia was claustrophobic with a capital 'C.' She wouldn't even close the shower curtain to take a shower. She was also extremely farsighted. And she was addicted to Tang. Some people wake up and the first word out of their mouth is 'coffee'—she said 'Tang.' "

Barbara: "Barbara taught me that large tits and large brains don't always travel in pairs. . . . She voted for Nixon in '72. By then it was all over."

"Ms. Minter": " 'Ms. Minter' was the youngest teacher at my high school. . . . She was a great English teacher. We spent many afternoons at her house having naked lunches, then she'd send me home with another great novel. Talk about incentive to read!"



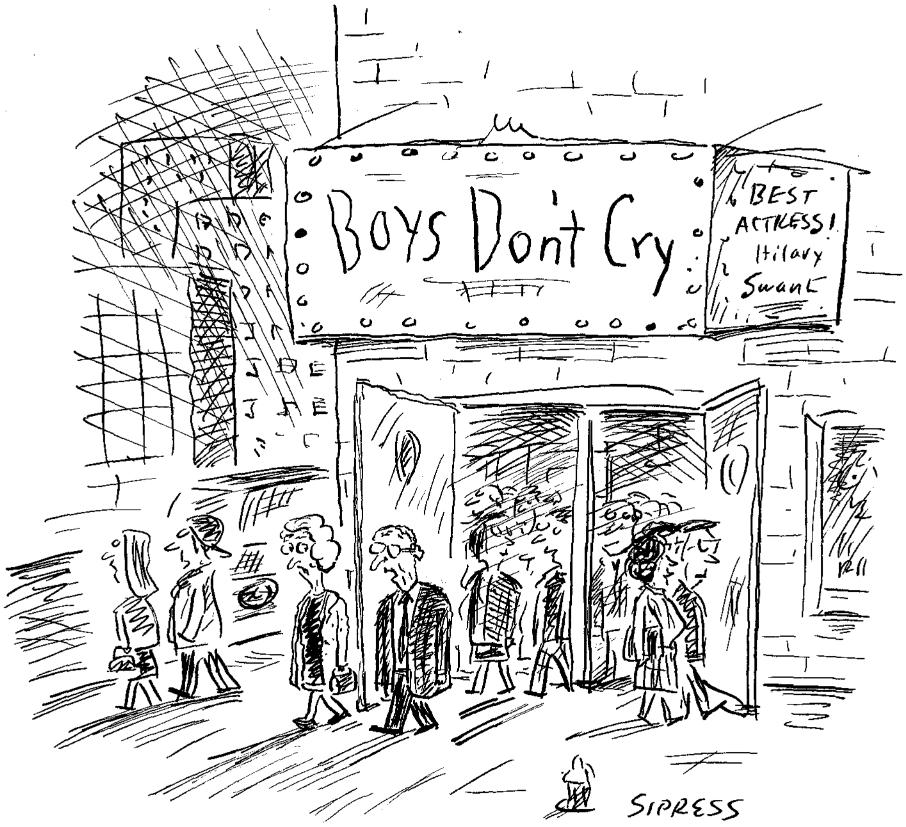
Mark Helfrich, in the seventies

The publisher of "Naked Pictures of My Ex-Girlfriends" is Rat Press, a subsidiary of Rat Entertainment, an eponymous entity founded by Brett Ratner, a young television and film director ("Money Talks," "Rush Hour"), who says he hopes to adapt the book for TV: "Right now we're working on the concept. Either a series or a kind of documentary-style show. We have to refine it before we go out to the networks. First of all, the title alone—if there was a show titled 'Naked Pictures of My Ex-Girlfriends'—would be huge. And there might be more books. Hopefully, we're gonna go through Mark's archives and we can do a sequel. Like, you know, naked pictures from the eighties and nineties, which would be awesome."

Mr. Helfrich, meanwhile, has settled down. He met his wife, Alexandra, four years ago, they've been married three years, and they have a two-year-old daughter. Though he's compiled quite a bit of recent material, he has no plans to publish a family photo album.

"Alexandra had never posed nude for anybody before she met me," he said. "Early on, I asked her to let me photograph her, and she said O.K., but she demanded to keep the film until we were married. So she had rolls and rolls of film, and as a wedding gift she had them developed, put them in a box, and gave me a box of naked photographs of my wife. Which I thought was a great gift—even better than scores of naked pictures of my ex-girlfriends."

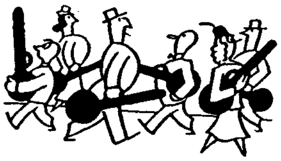
—*Mark Singer*



"Marjorie, I've got something to tell you."

• •

THE MUSICAL LIFE
RICKIE LEE JONES AND FOUR GUYS IN A STUDIO



Rickie Lee Jones, the magnetic singing star, was in town recently, recording a bunch of old songs for a new album of covers that she's planning to release sometime this summer. Jones, who is in her forties now, still has the little-hipster swagger and the big yet intimate sound that embedded itself in America's popular-music consciousness a little over twenty years ago, when she first hit with songs like "Coolsville" and a definitive version of "Lush Life."

When Jones started out, she was known for wearing battered stiletto heels and a beret and (sometimes) a spandex bodysuit. With a guitar slung over her shoulder, her slurred pronunciation of certain distinctive phrases, such as "livin' it up," part of her distinctive singing syntax, Jones was like no one anyone had ever seen before: a funky runaway who had managed to keep her innocence even as she lived, as she put it, "on the jazz side of life." That life included liaisons with her various cohorts in hip—Walter Becker, Tom Waits, Dr. John—performances in various dives, and a lot of hitchhiking.

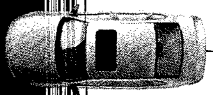
Now, as the single mother of one (she has an eleven-year-old daughter named Charlotte Rose) who lives quietly in Tacoma, Washington, with an English bulldog and some sound equipment, Jones still dresses with care, but maybe a little less flirt. She wore a gray T-shirt, a black skirt with a black lace hem, and black work boots to one of her sessions. Her long, sandy-colored hair hung loose around her face, making her resemble a somewhat more knowing Guinevere. Her smile was shy and seductive. As Jones presided over her session musicians—a guitarist, a bass player, a drummer, and a pianist—she smiled patiently, never backing down when they tried to resist some of her arrangements.

"Rickie, I don't hear what you want in the context of what you're singing," the bass man said after Jones asked him to use a bow on one intro, instead of plucking it.

"I do," Jones said. "I can hear it. Just try it. I know it's weird, and it's good because it's weird. Trust me." Then she turned to a visitor and said, "I think it's testosterone. They don't want to hear anything unless I've said it three or four times at least. Yep, definitely testosterone. I'm on some other frequency. I've been repeating myself to guys for years."

Rickie Lee Jones has seen a lot of musical motifs come and go, like disco and heavy metal and Lilith Fair. She was dropped from her previous record label, Mercury. But, like a number of her contemporaries—James Taylor, Neil Young, Sting—she has begun to co-produce her own studio sessions, and several record companies have lately been in a bidding war to distribute Jones and her new album.

The engineer asked Jones if she wanted to listen to a couple of playbacks. She said, "I can't listen to it now. I wouldn't know what I'd be listening to." After she left the room, the instrumentalists



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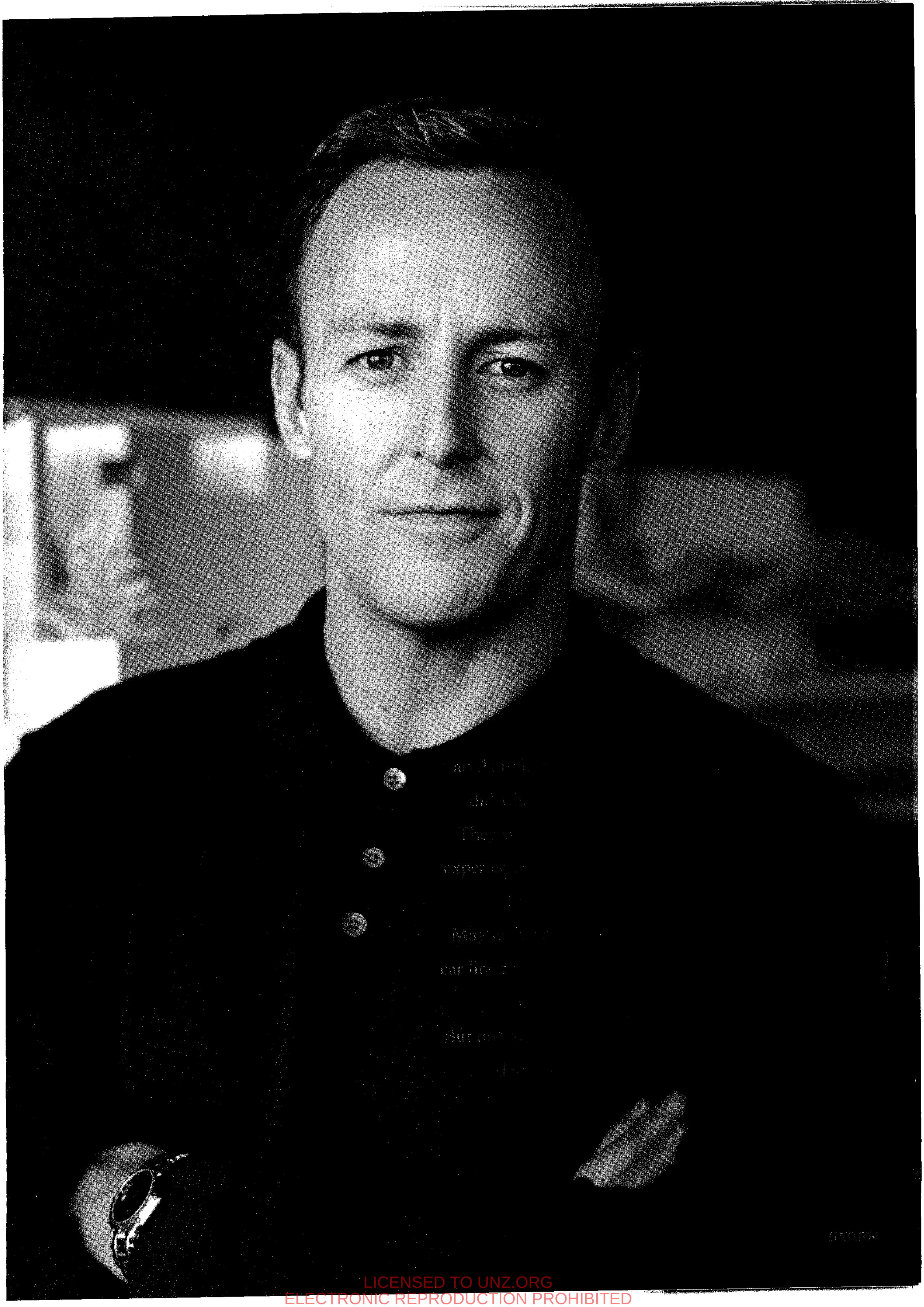
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DIVA CHECKLIST

(Posted backstage at VH1's "Divas 2000: A Tribute to Diana Ross," with Mariah Carey, Donna Summer, and Faith Hill.)

1. Miss Ross requests that she be addressed at all times as "Miss Ross."

2. In the event that crew members forget to address Miss Ross as "Miss Ross," Miss Ross requests that she be addressed as "Your Serene Highness, Queen of the Universe."

3. Miss Ross requests that she not be spoken to, touched by, or sung along with by Mariah Carey, Donna Summer, or Faith Hill.

4. Miss Ross requests that somebody explain to her exactly who this Faith Hill person is again.

5. Miss Ross requests that video trickery be used to make Mariah Carey's legs look forty per cent shorter.

6. Miss Ross requests that, in her onstage introduction, her performance as Dorothy in "The Wiz" be referred to as both "critically acclaimed" and "Oscar-winning."

7. Miss Ross requests that the audience greet Ms. Summer's singing with a derisive chant of "Na na na na, na na na na, hey hey hey, goodbye."

8. Miss Ross requests that the other divas be served meals consisting entirely of Hot Pockets.

9. Miss Ross requests that the onstage introduction of Ms. Carey make prominent use of the word "ho."

10. Miss Ross requests that no reference be made, onstage or off, to the existence of other Supremes.

—*Andy Borowitz*

gathered around the electronic panel, where so many songs were stored, including Jones's slow-moving renditions of Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man" and Vernon and Gershwin's "I Can't Get Started." When the bass player heard his bowed solo, he closed his eyes and nodded. He said, "She was right. It's good. I'm so glad I didn't mess up." When the playback was over, Jones came back into the studio. She had thrown a maroon work shirt over her shoulders. Everyone congratulated her on the arrangements. Rickie Lee Jones smiled and didn't say a word. She walked into her recording booth and asked the engineer if he was rolling tape, and got back to work.

—*Hilton Als*

THE BOARDS

THE BLUE MEN HAVE LEFT THE BUILDING!

In 1991, three bald, mute, cobalt-blue beings of unknown origin landed in the East Village, where they attempted to communicate via epigram-delivering L.E.D. panels, a strange bass instrument known as a tubulum, and funny things done with food (bananas, Twinkies, Cap'n Crunch). But New Yorkers, instead of running for the hills, paid to see them in droves. Typical. The trio, of course, were Matt Goldman, Phil Stanton, and Chris Wink, and their show, "Blue Man Group: Tubes"—a combination of ethereally percussive music and sly, nonverbal commentary on the art world, the information age, and the state of science—has been filling the Astor Place Theatre ever since.

But domination of New York was only the beginning. These days, there are a total of twenty-eight Blue Men, who have established beachheads in Chicago and Boston, and you can buy a Blue Man T-shirt, a piece of original Blue Man art work, and a Blue Man CD (which beat Britney Spears on the Amazon charts one day). Recently, the Blue Men opened in their biggest venue yet, a twelve-hundred-seat palace at the Luxor Las Vegas. The Luxor's management has given Goldman, Stanton, and Wink the freedom to expand the show as they see fit (there is a lot of neon involved now), and the original trio themselves are appearing in the show.

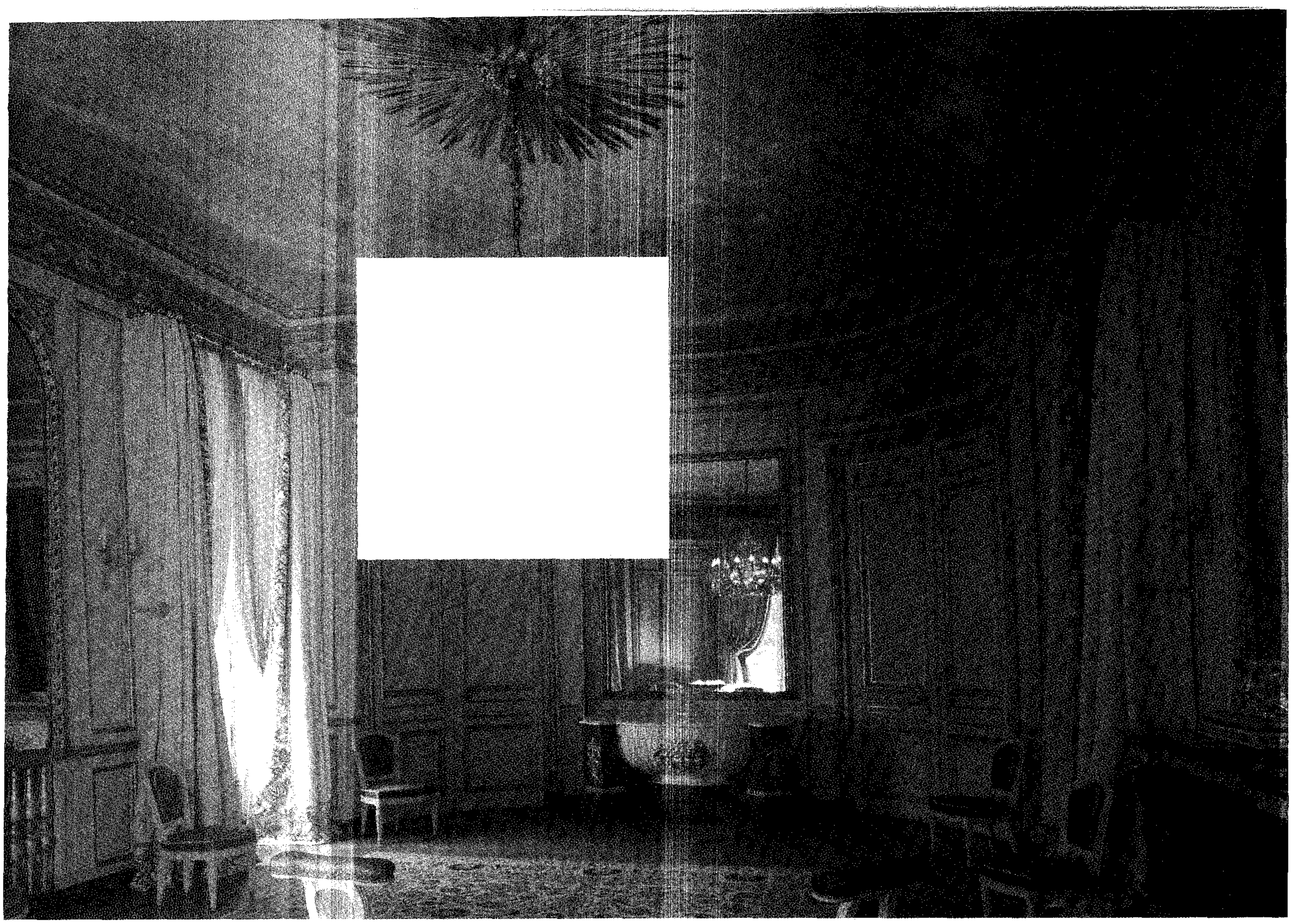
It was only by accident that the Blue Men started to multiply, making possible the burgeoning Blue Man industry. "One day, Phil was doing some woodworking at home, and he shredded his hand," Wink says. This was back in the early days, when the Blue Men did their own makeup (it took almost two hours) and cleaned up their own stage mess (fifteen hundred feet of recycled crêpe paper, gallons of splashed paint, a lot of spewed bananas). They had performed fifteen hundred shows in three years with no understudies, but now they let their band's drummer stand in for Stanton.

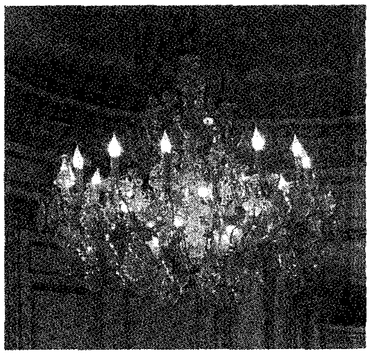
After that, the Blue Men began to replicate. "Our battle cry has been 'Regeneration through recombination,' " Wink says. Wink, Stanton, and Goldman auditioned more than twenty thousand candidates before selecting the current Blue Men. According to Steve White, one of the performers in the New York show, Blue Men are born, not made. Although White satisfied most of the on-paper requirements (Blue Men are between five-ten and six feet tall, are excellent drummers, have sparkly eyes, and are masters at catching gumballs and marshmallows in their mouths), he still had to undergo the process of what he calls "finding the Blue Man within." During rehearsals, another Blue Man might ask White, "Why did you do that? Blue Man wouldn't do that."

Some might argue that, by playing Vegas, Goldman, Stanton, and Wink are embracing the very kind of consumer-driven success that contradicts the "Blue Man values" the trio like to talk about—the idea that Blue Man is a blank slate that sardonically reflects the foibles of contemporary popular culture. Wink admits to having his doubts. "We still have that New York City prejudice: Is it uncool to be here? Will we *become* that thing?"

Still, the Blue Men, being Blue Men, are persevering. "If someone could come here and do something good, it could attract another kind of audience," Wink says. "Vegas needs us. Superman isn't affected when he's around the bad guys. We won't be, either."

—*Emily Nunn*





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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
HAVE AMAZON'S CRITICS MISREAD THE BOOKS?

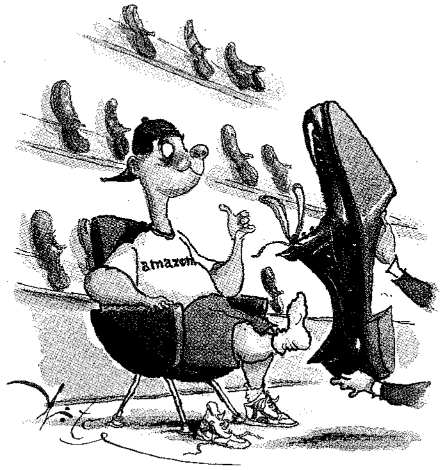
In the early nineties, the financial media lamented that the market was obsessed with near-term profit at the expense of long-term growth. Traders, it was said, were forcing companies to boost this year's profits by cutting back on expenditures that could have built future empires. Today, though, it's not investors who are clamoring for short-term profits: it's the financial media.

Hence the curious case of Amazon.com. In a 1997 letter to shareholders, its C.E.O., Jeff Bezos, wrote, "We will continue to make investment decisions in light of long-term market leadership considerations rather than short-term profitability considerations or short-term Wall Street reactions," and the company has done precisely that, building a company that will have an estimated $2.7 billion in sales this year. Investors have rewarded Amazon, giving it a valuation of twenty-three billion dollars.

Judging from the financial media, though, these investors are either insane or deluded. *Barron's* has dedicated itself to revealing the company as a fraud. In a cover story last year titled "Amazon.bomb," the magazine accused Amazon of covering its huge losses with accounting "gimmickry." In a follow-up story, *Barron's* said that Amazon's numbers were "worse, a lot worse" than investors thought, and just the other week it declared that the company was going to run flat out of cash in ten months. The *Times* has been equally dubious. A cover story in the *Times Magazine* said that Amazon was "hemorrhaging" money and described Bezos as "spinning epics out of thin air," and the *Times* financial columnist Gretchen Morgenson has compared Bezos to the Wizard of Oz. After all, as journalists like to repeat, the company has lost close to nine hundred million dollars since its inception.

By now, a figure like that doesn't come as much of a shock. It's generally accepted, even among sympathetic souls, that Amazon is spending like mad to acquire new customers, and that it's losing tons of money just keeping the business running. We all know this, and we're all wrong. Amazon's real losses since opening its virtual doors for business, in 1995, are much smaller than its official "accumulated deficit." In fact, if you add up all the cash Amazon has lost operating its business in the past five years, the amount comes to about sixty million dollars.

Now, you can crunch the numbers differently—a slightly more conservative estimate would put the cash outflow at around a hundred and thirty million—but you still won't end up anywhere near nine hundred million. For one thing, Amazon's tight control of its inventory means that it has had to put very little cash into the business to keep it running. For another, a big chunk of Amazon's paper losses are so-called "good-will charges," incurred by its acquisitions of other companies. When you buy a company, you're supposed to write off the difference between what you paid and the value of that company's "hard assets." Amazon has bought Web companies, which have negligible meltdown assets, so those charges are huge. But they're just accounting fictions, left over from the smokestack era. No money is coming out of Amazon's bank account to pay them. And if you factored in the value of Amazon's holdings—it owns a chunk of Drugstore.com, Ashford.com, Kozmo.com, and so forth—its paper gains alone would almost put it into the black.



MICHAEL WITTE

Michael Mauboussin, the chief U.S. investment strategist at Crédit Suisse First Boston, has done a fascinating study that compares Amazon's early years to those of Wal-Mart, the greatest retailer of postwar America. Amazon is in the midst of building and leasing giant distribution centers all over the country, and it will probably have invested close to five hundred and eighty million dollars in them by the time it's done, in 2001. At that point, it is expected to have about $4.3 billion in sales. The company's critics see these investments as further proof of Amazon's spendthrift ways. But Mauboussin's study shows just how well Amazon has managed its growth: it has grown faster than Wal-Mart did, while spending less money. Amazon will have reached that $4.3 billion in six years; Wal-Mart took twice as long (from 1973 to 1984) to get that big and had to invest a lot more in fixed assets. The Amazon of 2001 and the Wal-Mart of 1984 should look very much alike.

There's just one important difference. For Wal-Mart to keep expanding, it has had to keep investing—to buy more stores, pave more parking lots. (It spent four billion dollars during the past year alone.) But Amazon, with the money that it is spending now, will gain enough warehouse space for a company two or three times its size. "It's like buying a size-10 shoe for a size-3 foot," Mauboussin says. In other words, Amazon won't have to invest much in order to keep growing, which means that its potential returns on capital could be three or four times Wal-Mart's. It will, to invoke the magic verb of E-business, *scale.*

Plenty of questions remain about the future of E-commerce on the Web. Maybe we'll find that Amazon's seventeen million customers aren't worth as much as we think (though other companies are now paying Amazon hundreds of millions of dollars for access to them). Maybe we'll find that its customers, in search of lower prices, will happily switch to other venders, despite Amazon's expertise in order fulfillment, customer service, and customization. Still, as Mauboussin says, "the Net is looking more and more like a winner-takes-all or winner-takes-most economy." With the help of patient investors, Amazon is in a strong position to be one of those winners. There are worse ways to blow sixty million.

—*James Surowiecki*

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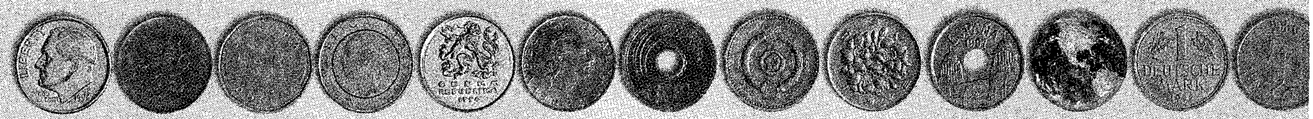

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ANNALS OF CRIME

LAND OF THE STUPID

When you need a used Russian submarine, call Tarzan.

BY ROBERT I. FRIEDMAN

On a September day last year, at the tail end of Hurricane Floyd, I took a taxi ride to the Federal Detention Center in downtown Miami to interview a man known as Tarzan. His real name is Ludwig Fainberg, and until recently he was the ringleader of the Russian mob in South Florida. When I got to the prison, the guards took my passport, my keys, and a pack of chewing gum I had in my pocket. ("It'll cost us two thousand dollars to unjam a lock from that gum if an inmate gets hold of it," one of the guards said.) I was led to a large rectangular room where prisoners in gray jumpsuits silently waited for their lawyers and guests.

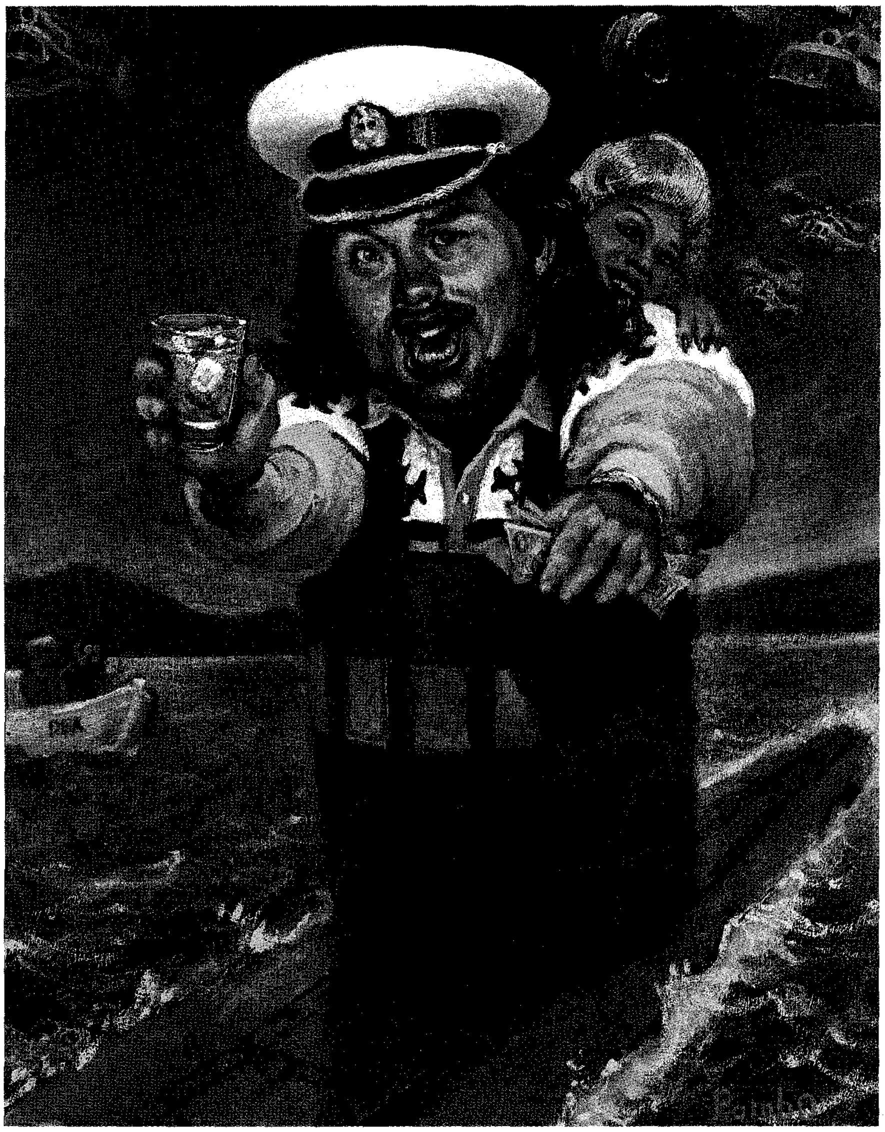
In a glass-walled cubicle at the back I spotted Tarzan, a pallid man in his early forties, glaring grimly as he slumped over a brown Formica table. He used to have wild, acid-rock hair, but now it had been shorn; he once took pride in a steroid-enhanced physique, but today he looked like a deflated tire. Tarzan slammed a thick document down on the table. It was his indictment, and it consisted of thirty counts, among them conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin, buying stolen property, counterfeiting, and money laundering. " 'United States versus Tarzan,' " he said, paraphrasing a bit. "I already spent a million dollars on lawyers. Who can fight the U.S. government?"

Since the collapse of Communism, the Mafiya, as it is known to outsiders (Russian gangsters affect disdain for the term), has become bigger, more brutal, and better armed; it is widely believed to be richer than any other criminal cartel—richer, even, than its counterpart in Colombia. The Russian mob buys and swaps drugs, money, handguns, assault carbines, submachine guns, anti-aircraft missiles, helicopters, plutonium, enriched uranium, and submarines. In 1996, James Moody, who was then the F.B.I.'s deputy assistant director in charge of organized crime, warned Congress that the Russian mob, which has thirty crime syndicates operating in more than seventeen North American cities, has "a very real chance" of becoming "the No. 1 crime group in the United States." And, until recently, the No. 1 Russian crime figure in Miami was Ludwig Fainberg.

I began investigating the world of Russian organized crime in the late nineteen-eighties, venturing into strip clubs in New York and Miami, suburban homes in cities like Denver, and prison cells across the United States. Of all the mobsters I came into contact with, Tarzan was certainly the most garrulous. He first became conspicuous in Miami in the early nineties. A strip club he owned in a warehouse district near Hialeah Race Track—Porky's, inspired by the film of that name—attracted so many Russian mobsters, from Tashkent to Brighton Beach, that local policemen referred to it as Redfellas South. It was the place to go for recreational drugs, bootleg cigarettes, and stolen bottles of Stolichnaya—or, for bigger spenders, thousand-dollar-a-night Eurasian prostitutes and Colombian cocaine. At various times, Fainberg also owned not only a residence in Miami but a restaurant, several luxury cars, and a pleasure boat.

As we chatted in the prison cubicle, Tarzan spoke expansively about his disreputable past, but he also took pains to mention his eleemosynary activities, and described numerous fund-raisers that he had held for Jewish charities at a restaurant and night club he owned called Babushka. Fainberg, who is Jewish, insists that he never stole from Jewish organizations. "You've got to be kidding!" But, according to statements that he made to undercover agents for the Drug Enforcement Agency, the operating costs for these events tended to run high—eighty-five cents of every dollar.

He certainly had the qualities of a mobster: he was greedy (he allegedly stole tip money from the strippers at his club); he was ruthless (he once forced a woman to eat gravel); and he was ambitious (he brokered a complicated negotiation involving the transfer of a Russian military submarine to Colombian narcotraffickers). In Russia, Fainberg told me, dishonesty is a trait that is bred in the bone. Deprivation has taught Russians to be cunning predators—it's the only way to survive, he said. "We lived by the eleventh commandment—don't get caught." Americans, by contrast, were trusting souls, he thought. Their rules were made to be broken. "America is the land of the stupid," he said. "The land of make-believe. If you ask me to describe America in one word, I would tell you this is Disneyland. And I'm surprised that Mickey Mouse is not yet the President."



"Tarzan wasn't so smart," a fellow-Russian said of Ludwig Fainberg, the ambitious Miami mob kingpin. "He had steroids for brains. He had a big-muscle peanut brain."

POMBO

Fainberg was born in 1958 in Odessa, a Black Sea port that was once the Marseilles of the Soviet Union. His parents soon divorced, and when he was three he moved with his mother, who had remarried, and his stepfather to Czernowitz, a small city in Ukraine. He sang in a boys' choir and participated in a boxing program set up by the Soviet military. More to the point, his stepfather, who worked for a Soviet factory that made rugs and fur hats, was a prosperous dealer on the burgeoning black market. He'd trade merchandise for choice cuts of meat, theatre tickets, and fresh vegetables. "My mother had nice clothes and jewelry," Fainberg said. "We took a vacation once a year to Odessa, a stunning city with a boardwalk and gorgeous beaches." It was a city, he said, "filled with mobsters and entertainers."

One day in 1972, when Fainberg was fourteen, his mother and stepfather announced that they were moving the family to Israel, where they hoped to increase their already considerable wealth. Ludwig, who had never known the family to identify with Judaism in any way, was confused. "Jew" was just something stamped on their passports, he thought, signifying their ethnic group. "I knew only that I was circumcised."

Before leaving, the Fainbergs converted their money into gold and diamonds, stashing some in shoes with hollow heels and hiding the rest in secret compartments in specially built tables and a piano, which they shipped to Israel. There they lived on a kibbutz. Fainberg, with his wild mane and his flair for daredevil stunts—he once jumped off a second-story roof—soon acquired his nickname. "One of the kids said, 'You look like Tarzan'—you know, build, hair, muscles."

At eighteen, Fainberg, who was now six feet one, was drafted into the Israeli Navy, and he applied to an élite Navy Commando unit. He washed out during basic training, and served the remaining three years of his service in the weapons-control room of a destroyer. In 1979, Fainberg moved to West Berlin, claiming to be a boxer defecting from the Soviet Union. Like many young Russian émigrés, he says, he joined a mob crew. His specialty was credit-card fraud. Then he tried his hand at extortion. Working for a local racket—run, he later learned, by a notorious gangster named Efim (Fima) Laskin, who had sold weapons to the Red Brigades, in Italy—he was ordered to go to a certain restaurant and abduct a Russian named Leonid, who owed the gang money. Fainberg and his accomplices drove Leonid to a bank so that Leonid could get cash for them. But shortly after they arrived the hostage's friends—a group of rival mobsters—showed up and dealt Fainberg's men a severe beating. Fainberg, who happened to be in a store buying cigarettes at that moment, escaped, but the rival mob put out a contract on him. He fled to Cologne and went into hiding. A few years later, he landed in Brooklyn, at Brighton Beach.

From the middle to the late nineteen-seventies, the Soviet government was under intense diplomatic pressure from the West to let Jews emigrate freely. In response, the authorities searched the Gulag for Jewish criminals—some of them quite recent converts to the faith—and shipped them to America. (During the Cold War, criminal-background information was unavailable to United States immigration officials, and their ability to screen criminals was severely limited.) More than forty thousand Russian Jews settled in Brighton Beach. Most were decent, hardworking citizens, but the criminals among them resumed their careers as thieves and swindlers. By the time Fainberg arrived, in 1984, Brighton Beach had already become the seat of the Organizatsiya, as the Russian Jewish mob was called. "It was the Wild West," Fainberg told me. "I took my gun everywhere."

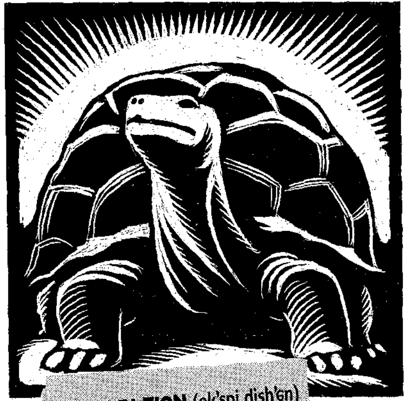
Fainberg quickly discovered that there were two distinct communities in Brighton Beach. Affluent Russians lived in well-kept Art Deco apartment buildings near the ocean; poor Russians lived—sometimes ten to a room—in decaying clapboard houses amid crack dens on the area's many side streets. Even the local McDonald's had folded. Bordered on one side by the shore and on another by an enormous middle-class housing project, referred to by the émigrés as "the great wall of China," the Russians built a closed world. It was modelled on Odessa. On frigid winter mornings, beefy men in fur hats strolled the boardwalk, stopping at venders to buy piroshki. Movie houses showed first-run Russian-language films; the conversations in the cafés were in Russian and Ukrainian. Tarzan spent much of his time in mob haunts, flirting with the wives of big-time mafiosi and "getting into fistfights," as he recounts it. Soon after he arrived in Brooklyn, he married Maria Raichel, a princess of the Russian Mafiya and a beauty. (Maria's grandfather was said to have stabbed a man to death in Russia. Her first husband and his brother, known as Psyk—Russian for psycho—became high-level extortionists, but, because of their uncontrollable behavior, they eventually fell into violent conflict with other Russian gangsters, who ordered hits on them.)

Fainberg took up with a fellow-émigré named Yossif Roizis, known to his friends as Gregory, or Grisha. Their families had been friends in Ukraine and were neighbors in Israel. Roizis had spent three years in prison in Siberia for hitting a man who was recovering from an appendectomy—hitting him so hard that his fist penetrated the abdominal cavity and killed him. Now Roizis headed one of the most feared Russian gangs in Brighton Beach. He owned a wholesale furniture store with branches in Coney Island, Italy, and Russia, which the D.E.A. and a knowledgeable figure in the Genovese underworld say fronted for a heroin business involving Italian and Russian mobsters. Fainberg says that he helped Roizis's crew with torch jobs and extortion. He also went into business with the owners of a furniture store in nearby Bensonhurst. Roizis wanted Tarzan's partners, a brother and sister, to stock their store with his store's furniture. "I can't get them to do that," Tarzan said. "Well, then it's time for them to disappear," Roizis replied. They did. ("I asked Roizis what happened to them," Fainberg said, "but he never told me anything.") Tarzan took over the business.

Inevitably, the Russian mobsters crossed paths with their Italian counterparts. One day, according to Fainberg, an old woman walked into the furniture store and asked to buy a twin-size mattress on credit. "You've got to be crazy," a clerk replied. Fainberg overheard the conversation and gave the woman the mattress and box spring as a gift. He even loaded it onto his truck and delivered it to her house. He said he felt sorry for her, and, besides, they had samples to spare. Two years later, a powerfully built Italian sauntered into a video store that Fainberg owned and asked for him. "I was scared shitless," Fainberg recalled. "He looked like Luca Brasi in 'Godfather.' " Introducing himself as Frank, the man said, "I'm the son of the old woman you gave the mattress to. I owe you. Anything you want is yours."

Fainberg was awestruck. "You could feel his power," he said. "He was the kind of man who wouldn't take no for an answer."

Over the next several months, if the landlord attempted to raise the rent at the video store Tarzan would call Frank. When an Italian extortionist tried to shake Tarzan down, Frank's boys had the



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thug pistol-whipped. As we spoke, Tarzan repeatedly assured me that he didn't know the identity of his patron until, one day in 1987, he saw him identified in the *Times* as the late Frank Santora, a notable member of the Colombo organized-crime family. Santora had been shot twice at close range outside a dry-cleaning store on a quiet Brooklyn street.

After that, life became more dangerous for Fainberg and his friends. One of those singled out for merciless treatment was Alexander Slepinin, nicknamed the Colonel, a three-hundred-pound, six-foot-five black belt who claimed to have served with the Russian Special Forces in Afghanistan. Slepinin had tattoos of a panther and a dragon on his upper torso—signs that he had spent time in Soviet prisons. He was trained in a variety of martial arts, and kept a large collection of knives and machetes, which he used to dismember extortion victims in his bathtub before disposing of the body parts.

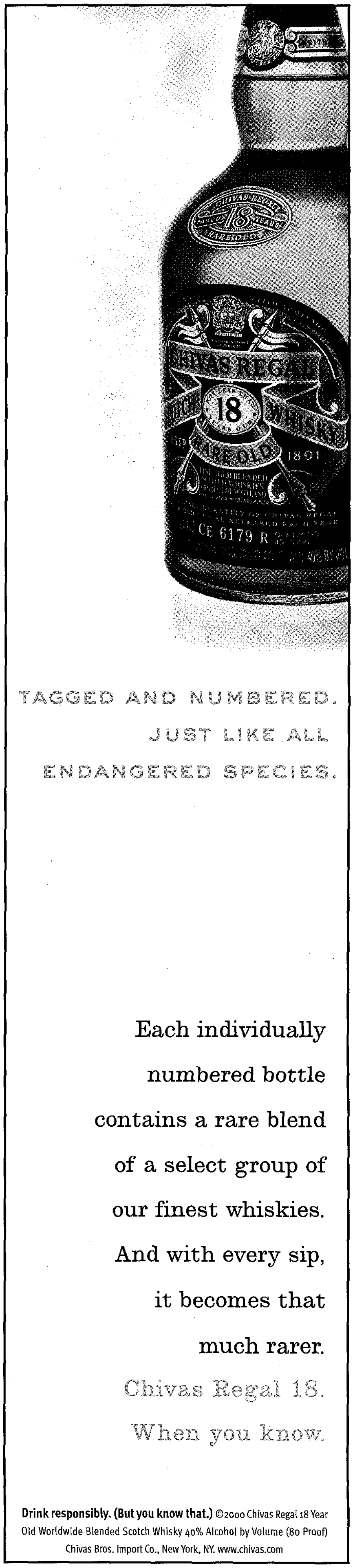
On a June morning in 1992, while Slepinin was sitting in his Cadillac on a residential street in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, he was ambushed by a group of Russians. According to eyewitnesses, the big man, wheezing heavily, begged his assailants for mercy. "We are not in the church," one of the hit men replied. Slepinin tried to squeeze out of the car through the passenger door, but he was shot three times in the back. The bullets were aimed to insure that his death would be agonizing. Thrashing and moaning, Slepinin continued to beg for his life. Two bullets to the back of the head finally finished him off. "He was a big, huge motherfucker—a monster, a cold-blooded killer," one of the alleged assassins, an infamous Russian gangster named Monya Elson, told me during an interview at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan. He was being held there on charges of heading a racketeering outfit called Monya's Brigade, which was responsible for three murders, including Slepinin's. (The case is still pending.) Although Elson maintained that he was innocent, he also said, "The F.B.I. and everybody have to fucking give me an award."

Fainberg is more sentimental. "My mother loved the Colonel," he recalled gloomily. Even before Slepinin's death, Tarzan had decided that it was time once again to move to a safer neighborhood. He had not been getting along with his wife anyhow, he said, and in 1989 he left her, and Brighton Beach, and headed south.

Long before Fainberg got to Florida, in 1990, the Miami Beach Police Department had noticed that an inordinate number of newly arrived Russian taxi-drivers were involved in many of the same crimes that had made the Italian Mafia so powerful: extortion, narcotics, gambling, and prostitution. Diana Fernandez, an assistant United States Attorney, says that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, "Miami was a boomtown for the Russian mob." The mobsters had become rich in the era of privatization, and they bought rows of luxury condominiums in North Miami Beach or spent millions for mansions on Fisher Island, one of the city's most fashionable residential areas. Several of the buyers were former high-ranking Russian military officers and ex-K.G.B. officials. They had found their perfect dacha: a base for money laundering which was also convenient to South American cocaine.

In Miami, Fainberg met William Seidle, a very successful car dealer. A veteran D.E.A. agent told me that Seidle has been under investigation by numerous federal agencies for more than twenty years, although he has never been indicted. Seidle's friends respond to these allegations with bafflement. "Bill Seidle is a great guy," William Lehman, a former Democratic congressman, told me. Lehman, who represented North Dade County for twenty years and has known Seidle for fifty years, says that Seidle enjoyed Fainberg's "outrageousness" but that he himself ran a "kosher" business.

Seidle liked Fainberg from the moment they met. "Tarzan was a boisterous, bigmouthed yiddel," he told me in Miami, speaking with obvious affection. "He's a Jewboy, you know. Just a bigmouth kid, always bragging, boisterous—but very nice, very kind." Seidle saw in Fainberg a younger version of himself: a risktaker. In Miami, Fainberg ran a furniture and moving company out of a warehouse owned by Seidle. A local charitable foundation gave Fainberg donated clothes, which he sold for profit. Before long, Seidle and Fainberg decided that there was a lot of money to be made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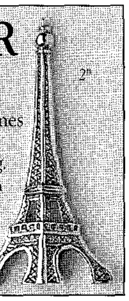

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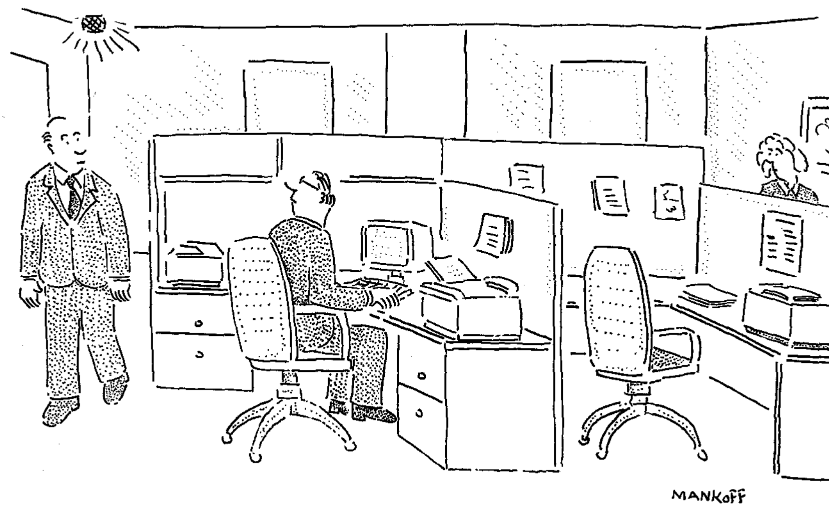

"The following is a test of the fire-alarm system. It is only a test. Please ignore the intense heat and combustion."

• •

in strip clubs. According to government informants, in 1991 Seidle staked Tarzan to the club that became Porky's, in return for a hidden share of the off-the-book profits. Tarzan was proud of his upward mobility in his adopted land: "From schmattes to the big tits!" he told me. "Can you imagine! What a country!" Seidle, for his part, denies receiving club profits, acknowledging only that he collected rent as the club's landlord.

At Porky's, Fainberg held court for visiting dons from the former Soviet Union. One of the most powerful was Anzor Kikalischvili, a Moscow-based businessman who had long been on a C.I.A. list of prominent Soviet organized-crime figures and, in a conversation taped by the F.B.I., once boasted that he had more than six hundred "soldiers" in South Florida. In one conversation, Kikalischvili warned a Russian couple with whom he had a partnership in a Miami deli that if they didn't pay him two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for his share he would skin them like animals. The couple fled the country, and Fainberg, who had introduced them to Kikalischvili, became a partner in the deli.

In addition to extortion, Fainberg had a habit of degrading women. "This is cultural," he explained to me, in an effort to defend himself. "In Russia, it was normal for men to beat women. In the stories Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, and Gorky wrote, to slap a woman is normal, it's part of life. And to do something like that in America, something that you grew up with—you're arrested, for domestic violence!" In an incident observed by the F.B.I. and the D.E.A. from surveillance cars across the street from Porky's, Fainberg chased a girlfriend out of the club and decked her. On another occasion, he allegedly beat a girlfriend's head against the door of his Mercedes until the car was covered with blood; and he regularly abused his common-law wife, a frail young woman named Faina Tannenbaum, whom he had brought with him from New York. When the police arrived at their home in response to 911 calls, she would quiver in fear, and was sometimes found huddled inside a locked car with her daughter. Tannenbaum never pressed charges, however. In 1996, as she was driving to pick up her daughter at a day-care center, her car hit a tree and she was killed. Her blood-alcohol level was far over the legal limit, and the car was travelling at more than ninety miles per hour in a thirty m.p.h. zone.

Fainberg's ambitions went beyond strip clubs. According to F.B.I. wiretap affidavits and Fainberg's own admissions to undercover agents, he and Seidle had a "grow lab" for hemp in a warehouse near Hialeah, with giant halogen lights. (Seidle denies this.) Fainberg boasted to two government undercover agents that he had a connection for "tons" of marijuana from Jamaica.

For Fainberg, marijuana was just a

gateway drug. In the early nineties, the Mafiya had little contact with the Colombian drug cartels, but Fainberg helped forge a connection, brokering cocaine deals between the Colombians and the most powerful mob family in Russia's St. Petersburg. In one instance, according to the D.E.A., he conspired to smuggle more than a hundred kilograms of cocaine a month in crates of frozen shrimp which were flown from Guayaquil, Ecuador, to St. Petersburg. He also ran small amounts of cocaine directly out of Miami. (He denies this.) And wiretap affidavits allege that his couriers "bodied" cocaine by the kilo.

Fainberg's principal link to the Colombians was through two men, Juan Almeida and Fernando Birbragher. Almeida, who is the son of a Cuban-American real-estate and construction mogul in Miami, had been a major cocaine dealer since the mid-nineteen-eighties, according to the D.E.A. Birbragher, a Colombian and a friend of Seidle's, had strong ties to the Medellín and the Cali cartels. He was indicted in 1982 on charges of laundering seventy-three million dollars for Colombian drug lords; he pleaded guilty in 1984 to a lesser charge of conspiring to defraud the United States government. One D.E.A. agent told me that Birbragher was a very close friend of the late Pablo Escobar, the notorious leader of the Medellín cartel. "Birbragher used to buy Escobar sports cars and do a lot of favors for him," the agent said. D.E.A. officials also strongly suspect that Birbragher laundered drug money for Manuel Noriega, the former Panamanian President, who was convicted in 1992 of drug trafficking, racketeering, and money laundering.

Fainberg worked closely with Almeida, who told him that they wouldn't have trouble with the law as long as they didn't sell drugs in America. According to F.B.I. sources, Fainberg's cocaine business did so well that he soon found himself fending off hostile takeover attempts from other Russian mobsters eager to do business with the Colombians.

By the mid-nineties, the Colombians had a thriving arrangement with the Russians—the Colombians supplied the cocaine and the Russians laundered the money. Now, according to D.E.A. officials, Fainberg and Almeida saw a way to expand this business. The Mafiya had access to military hardware from the former Soviet Union. Goods stored in deteriorating facilities and guarded by indifferent, bribable soldiers were easily available—everything from aircraft and armored personnel carriers to submarines.

In the fall of 1992, Fainberg travelled to Latvia, where, he told me, he knew people who could help him procure six heavy-lift Russian military helicopters. The choppers were intended for Pablo Escobar, who hoped to use them to transport chemicals to cocaine-refining laboratories in the jungle. (Fainberg told undercover agents that a "rich American Jew"—thought by the D.E.A. to be Seidle—was financing ten per cent of the cost of the trip, a charge Seidle heatedly denies.) Fainberg was accompanied by Almeida, Birbragher, and a group of Colombian and Cuban thugs. The trip was a failure, and Almeida and Birbragher blamed Fainberg. "He is an idiot," Almeida told me with disgust. "He didn't know anybody."

But in mid-1993 Fainberg succeeded. According to the D.E.A., he and Almeida bought as many as six MI-8 Russian military helicopters for something under a million dollars each. Fainberg later boasted to undercover agents that he had bought the helicopters to traffic cocaine for a group of "Colombian drug barons" headed by Escobar, and, after purchasing the helicopters, he stayed behind in Moscow to oversee the final details. At the request of the Colombians, Fainberg later said, the helicopters' seats were removed and fuel bladders were added to extend their range. With everything set, Fainberg went to a final meeting with the sellers. He was taken into a conference room and left alone with two big Russian guys. "They were like heavy weight lifters," he told me. "They were incredible hulks. I was in deep shit." One of the men opened the window. Parked outside were a Range Rover, a Mitsubishi Montero, a Lexus, and a Mercedes. When the man whistled, the doors opened and out came men armed with automatic weapons. "Well, that's my people," the man said to Fainberg. "I was waiting for your people."

"At that point, I understood I'm not going to leave Russia," Fainberg recalled. "I'm going to be buried in the motherland." The weight lifters informed him

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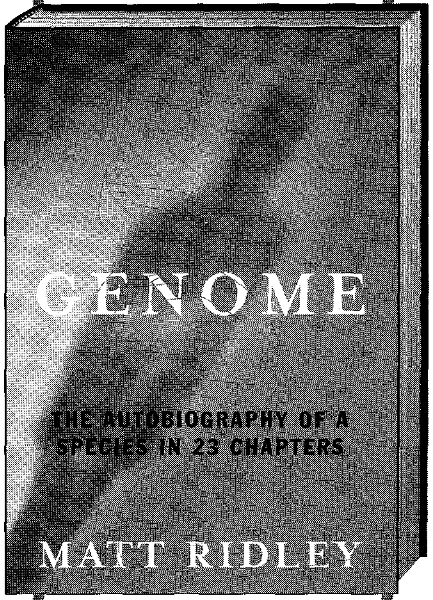

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that he had neglected to pay the local Mafiya for permission to buy the helicopters. Fortunately for Fainberg, "his people"—the Colombians—held a certain mystique for the Russians, and by alluding to his close connections with them he was able to buy time.

He telephoned Anzor Kikalischvili, the Russian don, who happened to be visiting Miami. Kikalischvili, who wanted Fainberg's help in obtaining a green card, said he'd make some calls and try to smooth things over, but meanwhile Fainberg would have to explain why he hadn't cut "the boys" in for a share. In another series of frantic phone calls, Fainberg described his predicament to Almeida. Almeida advised him to tell the Russians that the helicopters were for Pablo Escobar and that no one had told Escobar he was required to pay a bribe. Fainberg and Almeida hoped that the Russians might make an exception for Escobar, but the Russians were stubborn. If Escobar wanted the choppers, they replied, he would have to come to Moscow himself.

Almeida says he decided that the only way to get the helicopters—and to save Fainberg—was to pose as Escobar. At Sheremetyevo Airport, in Moscow, Almeida, dressed like the Colombian, was welcomed by a motorcade of thick-necked men driving black Mercedeses. (This is Almeida's account. Tarzan never mentioned an Escobar impersonation to me.) Almeida says he was escorted like a head of state to a five-star hotel in the center of the city and led into a dark room, where more thick-necked men sat around a long conference table. Almeida walked past them to the head of the table, where the don presided. There was a nervous silence. Suddenly, the Russian seized him in a bear hug and cried, "Pablo! Pablo Escobar! What took you so long? Let's do some real shit. Cocaine!"

To celebrate their new friendship, the Russians took Almeida and Fainberg out for a night on the town. They went to a dingy boxing ring called the Samurai Club, where chain-smoking mobsters and their girlfriends, wearing Italian designer clothes, had gathered to watch a match. Young men dressed in street clothes were led into the ring. Mafiya rules: only one could walk out alive. Blood spattered the crowd as spectators swilled vodka and placed bets on their favorite combatant. As implausible as this seems, Fainberg and Almeida have separately offered almost identical versions of the incident. The spectacle went on through the night. There was no air-conditioning in the club, and the stench of blood, Tarzan says, nearly made him vomit. The following day, he was permitted to fly out of Moscow. The helicopters, Fainberg told various federal undercover agents, were subsequently delivered to the Colombian drug barons.

SIMILE

As when her friend the crack Austrian skier, in the story
she often told us, had to face
his first Olympic ski jump and, from
the starting ramp over the chute that plunged
so vertiginously its bottom lip
disappeared from view, gazed
on a horizon of Alps that swam and dandled around him
like toy boats in a bathtub, and he could not
for all his iron determination,
training, and courage
ungrip his fingers from the railings of the starting gate, so that
his teammates had to join in prying
up, finger by finger, his hands
to free him, so

facing death, my
mother gripped the bed rails but still
stared straight ahead—and
who was it, finally,
who loosened
her hands?

—*Rosanna Warren*

Meanwhile, in the United States, the activities of the Russian mob were alarming a great many law-enforcement agencies. In 1994, Louis J. Freeh, the director of the F.B.I., said that the Russian Mafiya posed "a significant direct threat to the United States." In a few years, the Russians had supplanted the Cubans as one of the top crime groups in South Florida. Local, state, and federal officials set up a task force called Operation Odessa, and eventually developed ties with Canadian, Russian, and German police. Richard Gregorie, a bearded, professorial assistant U.S. Attorney who helped launch Operation Odessa, says of the Russians, "Their obvious sophistication far exceeds that of La Cosa Nostra at its infant stage."

Operation Odessa's agents had so far been unable to infiltrate Fainberg's close-knit world. That assignment fell to Fainberg's old Brighton Beach friend Grisha Roizis, who had by this time acquired the nickname the Cannibal. (A booking sergeant in Brooklyn had once called him "a fucking dirty Jew," and Roizis, although handcuffed, managed to bite off the tip of the sergeant's nose.) Roizis was by now indebted to the D.E.A. In 1992, he had been jailed in Romania on a U.S. warrant for heroin trafficking, and he became an informant in return for his release. He had no trouble getting close to Fainberg. "Gregory and I were like brothers," Fainberg told me. "He's the one who helped me when I arrived in Brighton Beach. He *loved* me!"

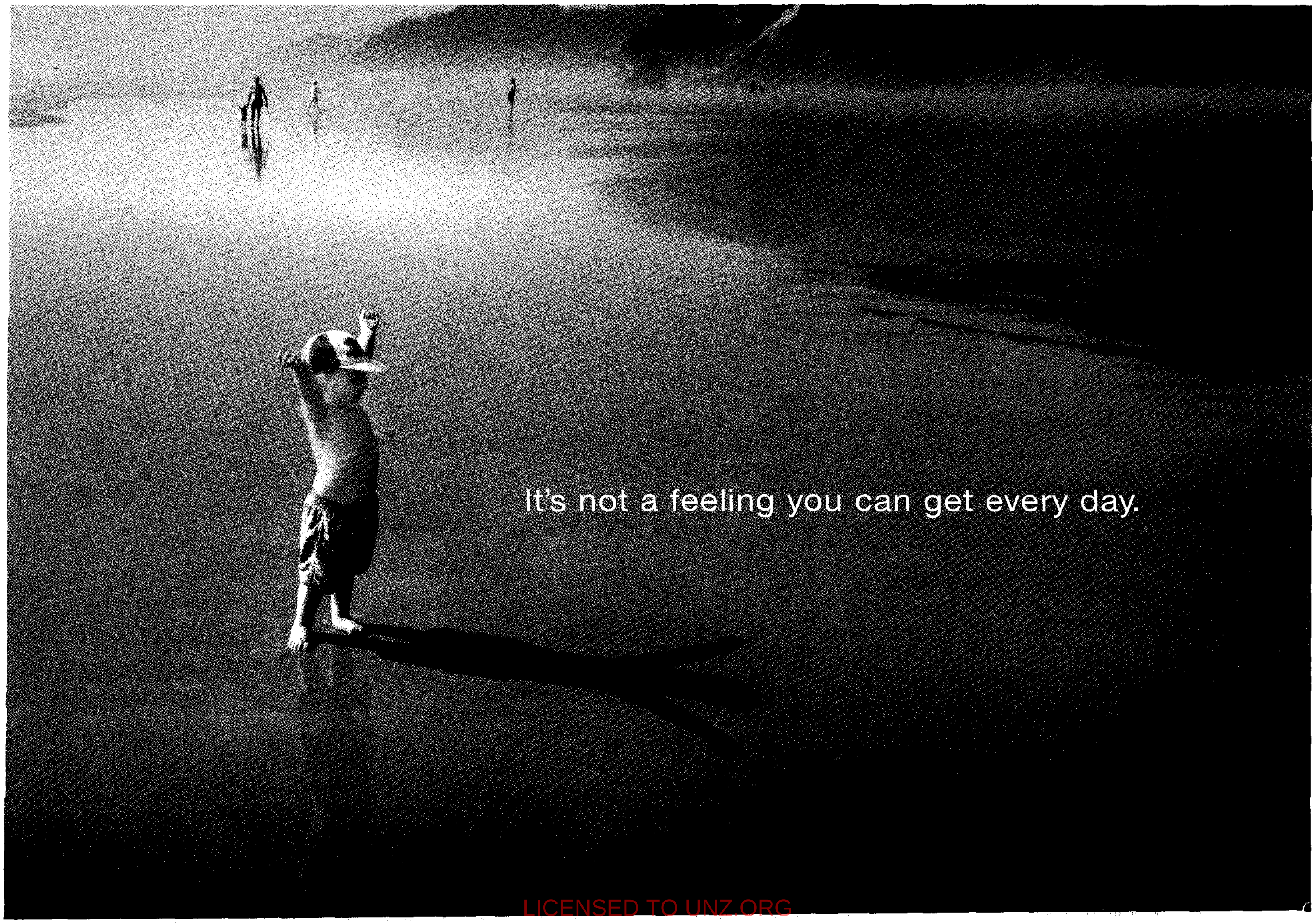
In October of 1994, Roizis, using seventy-two thousand dollars in cash supplied by the D.E.A., bought a managing partnership in Babushka, Fainberg's restaurant. Many people found the Cannibal's presence in the restaurant disturbing. A Brooklynite named Vladimir Ginzburg, who the F.B.I. believe was a key operative in Fainberg's cigarettebootlegging operation, had repeatedly told Fainberg that his buddy was working for the federal government. "I warned Tarzan about the rumors," Ginzburg said. "Tarzan didn't listen. So I asked Tarzan why he trusted him. He said they were both from the same town. He knew his father. He had his friends checked out. And Roizis had a cruel criminal past. That counts for a lot. Tarzan didn't have a comparable past—and Tarzan wasn't so smart. He had steroids for brains. He had a big-muscle peanut brain."

With Fainberg's confidence secured, Roizis got to his work. One day, a man named Alexander Yasevich walked into Babushka, posing as an arms-and-heroin dealer, and Roizis embraced him like a long-lost comrade. Fainberg dimly recognized Yasevich from Brooklyn; Yasevich had moved there from Odessa as a teen-ager. But, unbeknownst to Fainberg, Yasevich had joined the Marines, and then become an undercover agent for the D.E.A.

Five days later, they met again, at Porky's. Fainberg was in a mood to boast, and told Yasevich of his criminal exploits. The two men began to hang out together. Yasevich was offered free sex at the hotel next door to Porky's, and ate in expensive Japanese restaurants. They consumed enormous amounts of exotic concoctions, such as raw quail eggs drenched in *sake* and ice-cold vodka. The drinking and kibbitzing paid off for Yasevich. He learned that Fainberg was in the midst of executing his most audacious caper yet: the purchase of a hundred-million-dollar Soviet-era diesel-powered submarine, for "the people associated with the late Pablo Escobar." (Escobar had been hunted down and killed by Colombian authorities in December of 1993.) As a gift, Yasevich gave Fainberg a "safe" cell phone, which, of course, was closely monitored by the D.E.A.

When Fainberg was first approached about the submarine, the prospect unnerved him. The Russian helicopters had nearly cost him his life. But this time he made sure to clear the deal through Anzor Kikalischvili, whom he met with in Helsinki and, later, in Moscow. Finally—through the most powerful crime boss in St. Petersburg, a man named Misha Brave—Tarzan, Almeida, and Nelson Yester, a Cuban-American on the lam from a federal cocaine indictment, met two corrupt, high-ranking Russian military officers. Fainberg and Yester were taken to the front gate of Kronstadt, a sprawling naval base in the Baltic, where numerous abandoned diesel submarines bobbed on their sides, leaking oil, fluid, and battery acid into the harbor. Richard Palmer, who was a C.I.A. station chief in the former Soviet Union, told me that at such bases "anything is available—the Soviet fleet is rotting, and the sailors haven't been paid for months."

Initially, the Miamians wanted to buy a huge attack submarine for Escobar's East Coast drug trade. But a retired Russian submarine captain whom Fainberg nicknamed the Admiral suggested that they operate on the West Coast, where America's anti-submarine net was less active. According to the D.E.A., a Russian active-duty officer suggested that


It's not a feeling you can get every day.

Fainberg and his associates buy a small, diesel-powered Piranha-class submarine. Made of titanium and much quieter than other models, the Piranhas are used to plant saboteurs, troops, and spies behind enemy lines. But the Colombians considered the Piranha too expensive, and they wanted a submarine with greater range.

They finally agreed on a three-hundred-foot-long Foxtrot-class attack submarine, a model manufactured between 1958 and 1984, with a range of several thousand miles. It could disappear for days at a time and resurface, when required, to deliver drugs. Drug lords calculated that it could carry up to forty tons of cocaine. The Admiral told Fainberg that he had slipped a similar submarine past the Americans during the Cuban missile crisis. The Colombians planned to base the sub, which would be demilitarized and retrofitted to resemble an oceanographic-research vessel, in Panama or somewhere else on the Pacific side of Central or South America. From there, it would transport the drugs underwater to a ship outside Santa Barbara's territorial waters. The ship would then deliver the cocaine to ports along the Pacific Coast. A consortium of St. Petersburg mobsters and two active-duty admirals wanted twenty million dollars for the vessel. Fainberg bargained them down to $5.7 million. (A million of that would be his fee.) The money was to be passed through a dummy company in Switzerland in order to give an air of legitimacy to the oceanographic-research front. Fainberg planned to hire the retired captain for five hundred dollars a month and to secure a crew of seventeen to twenty-five men for a two-year contract; he even got permission to take photographs of the vessel to send to the Colombians. Tarzan told undercover agents that, at a party at a dacha, Misha Brave, the St. Petersburg crime boss, made a side deal with him to procure a "test shipment" of ten kilograms of cocaine from Miami for thirty thousand dollars a kilo. (Fainberg's cost per kilo was four thousand dollars.) To Tarzan, everything looked good.

On Tuesday, January 21, 1997, Fainberg was pulled over on a Miami street by a marked Metro-Dade Police Department vehicle. He was driving a white 1996 Jaguar convertible. As he spoke with the officers, two agents from the D.E.A., Brent Eaton and Detective Joseph McMahon, who had been trailing him in an unmarked car, approached. Eaton and McMahon introduced themselves and invited him to join them in their car. They told Fainberg that he was in trouble and would be arrested. They asked him to accompany them to a place where they and a few other officers could speak with him confidentially. Fainberg argued that he was a "nicer person" than they thought and said that he hadn't "done anything wrong."

At the interview site, a D.E.A. training room near Miami International Airport, Fainberg was offered a seat and a cup of coffee. McMahon told him that he was giving him a chance to work with the government rather than be arrested. Fainberg replied that he could be very useful to the government but was not well acquainted with United States laws and preferred to consult with his attorney before making a decision. Eaton told Fainberg that although he certainly had a right to consult with his lawyer, a man named Kieran Fallon, it might not be a wise decision, since Fallon represented other targets of the investigation. "I thought you would tell me what you have and ask me questions," Fainberg said, according to a transcript of the interrogation. "I don't know what to say, because I don't know what you think I have done."

McMahon asked Fainberg if he had ever bought liquor for Porky's or for Babushka from any source other than a legitimate wholesaler or liquor store. "Never!" Fainberg declared.

The detective asked him about his relationship with Anzor Kikalischvili.

"Anzor! I know nothing about what he does in Russia," Fainberg said. "I met him at my club. He is a sex maniac, always looking for girls. I helped him once when he opened a bagel store in Aventura."

"Tell us about Juan Almeida's activities," McMahon said.

"I don't know what he is up to," Fainberg said. "He speaks Spanish most of the time."

"You mean you travel all over the world with Almeida and you don't know what he's up to?"

"Yes."

"You know that those helicopters you get go to Colombian drug traffickers," McMahon said.

"They go to legitimate people," Fainberg replied.

When the officers accused him of lying, Fainberg said, "Maybe I should go to jail, then find out what you have."

The agents had had enough. They placed him under arrest, handcuffed him, and drove him to the D.E.A. processing room, where he was fingerprinted, photographed, and allowed to call his attorney.

Almeida surrendered to the authorities several days later. (His accomplice Nelson Yester remains at large.) Not only had Fainberg bragged about their activities to various undercover agents but he had even introduced Almeida to Yasevich, the D.E.A. undercover agent. At the time, Almeida told Yasevich that he represented a client with unlimited funds who was interested in buying a Russian diesel submarine; he added, with a laugh, that the vessel was going to be used to transport stolen gold off the coast of the Philippines.

Almeida, a suave man with a salesman's charm, told me in Miami that the sub was intended for an underwater museum in South Florida. (Fainberg makes a similar claim.) After Almeida was arrested, his lawyer, Roy Black, said that the sub was intended to carry tourists around the Galápagos Islands. As for the Russian helicopters, Almeida claimed that the aircraft were actually contracted by Helitaxi, a Bogotá-based company, to do heavy lifting at oil rigs in South America.

The investigation produced five hundred and thirty wiretapped conversations, in English, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Spanish. (It took a team of twenty translators a year to transcribe and analyze the tapes.) On the tapes and in conversations with the undercover agents, Fainberg implicated himself and others in numerous crimes. Louis J. Terminello, Fainberg's civil lawyer, says the only thing that his client is guilty of is having a big mouth. "It's the high-school kid who wants the high-school girl to believe that he's got the biggest dick in the world."

After months of sullen denial, Fainberg decided to coöperate. "He's admitted to everything," a D.E.A. agent named Pamela Brown told me several months after his arrest. "He keeps saying, 'Well, this would have all been legal in Russia.' " But then, after negotiating at least six proffer agreements, the feds decided to let him stand trial. They could not corroborate much of his information, and he said that he would never testify unless he was released on bail. There was little likelihood of that happening. The feds had a good idea what Fainberg would do if he obtained bail: informants reported that he was working with several powerful Israeli drug dealers in Miami who were going to help him flee to Israel; it is difficult to extradite Israeli nationals.

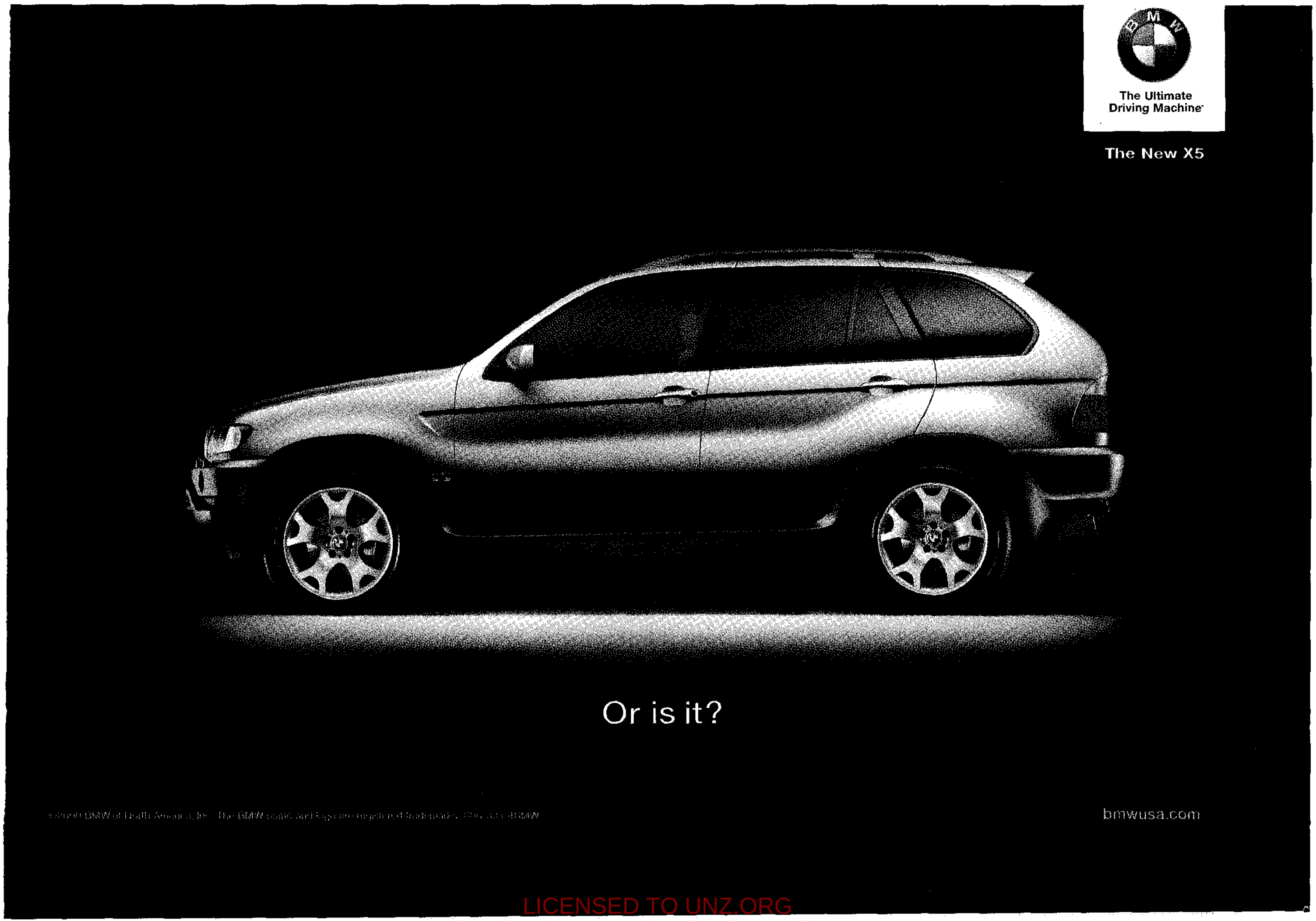
Finally, Fainberg, who faced a possible life sentence, pleaded guilty to one count of federal racketeering, which included conspiring to sell cocaine, heroin, and the Russian submarine, and sundry other crimes. He testified against Almeida, who was convicted of conspiracy to smuggle and distribute. "Tarzan's big mouth ruined my life," Almeida says. According to well-placed government sources, Almeida, who is awaiting sentencing, made threats against the judge and the prosecution team.

As for the Cannibal, Grisha Roizis—the man who helped the feds the most—in July of 1998 he seemed to be without a care in the world as he stood erect, his Popeye-like arms bulging out of a lime-green polo shirt, calmly awaiting sentencing in Federal District Court. In return for services rendered to the government, the judge sentenced him to time served and waived further jail time.

Less than a year later, Roizis was in trouble again: he was arrested by the Italian police in Rimini for money laundering, extortion, kidnapping, and racketeering. Most of his victims were small-time Russian entrepreneurs in Italy. Some of his illicit gains were allegedly passed through the Bank of New York. Apparently, shortly after working for the D.E.A. Roizis had begun to run a thriving criminal empire on the Adriatic Coast.

The Russian mob in South Florida today is the hub of a sophisticated and ruthless operation. But Ludwig Fainberg is no longer a member. At the conclusion of my conversations with him in prison in September, he said ruefully, "America's built on Mafia! All over the world, when you ask 'What do you know about America?' they say, 'Mafia, "Godfather," Bugsy Siegel, Meyer Lansky!' I swear, I can't believe John Gotti got life in jail. How can you kill your own history?"

Then, in October, after living in America for fifteen years, Fainberg was deported to Israel, with fifteen hundred dollars in his pocket. He had served a mere thirty-three months. His light sentence was in return for his coöperation, which reportedly included providing intelligence on several alleged Russian mob heavyweights. Even as he awaited deportation, Fainberg told me that, given what he knows about the sex industry, he'll soon be rich again. He was already cooking up a new scheme. "I'm going to Cuba. A few of my Russian friends already own resorts there." But his enthusiasm for the land he was leaving was undimmed. "I love this country!" Tarzan said. "It's so easy to steal here!" ♦



SHOUTS & MURMURS

YOU FILL OUT MY CENSUS

BY CHRIS HARRIS

A Letter from the Director of the Census Bureau, Spring 2000.

Dear U.S. Resident:

About one week from now, you will receive your U.S. Census form in the mail. It is extremely important that you return this form as promptly as possible. Do not even bother to fill out the form, if doing so will hamper its prompt return. Returning this form promptly is so important that we have chosen to spend millions on this advance reminder rather than begin addressing any of the numerous fundamental flaws in our census-taking procedures.

If for any reason you did not receive this letter, please return the enclosed card after checking the box marked "Did not receive this card." It is important that this be done promptly, as it will help us to determine how many people we will be unable to count.

If you have received this letter and you do not, or no longer, exist, it is yours to keep with our compliments. Simply write "Cancel" across your census form when it arrives and return the form in the postpaid envelope.

Note that some new ethnic categories have been added to the Census to more accurately reflect our nation's demographic makeup. In addition to existing groups, you will now be able to identify yourself as one or more of the following:

[ ] White, but tan easily
[ ] Latino with crossover appeal
[ ] Reform Party member
[ ] One of those people who say "Have a good one"
[ ] Tiger Woods

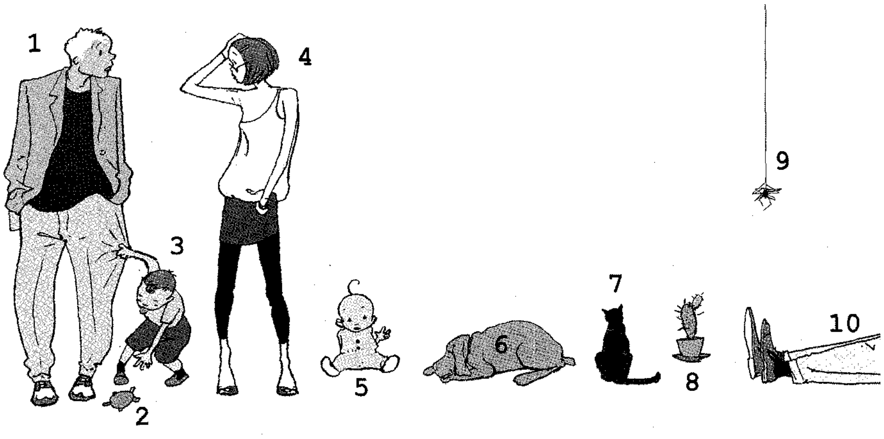
Also note that we are currently accepting applications for the position of Census Enumerator. Pay ranges from fifty-four cents (Wheeling, West Virginia) to eighty-eight dollars (New York, New York) per hour. To insure that you possess the appropriate numerical skills, you must pass a test before being hired.

Sample Question: Which of these numbers is not the number 4?

A) 4 B) 4 C) 4 D) 6

(Answer: D)

At the end of your training, you will be required to swear (or affirm)



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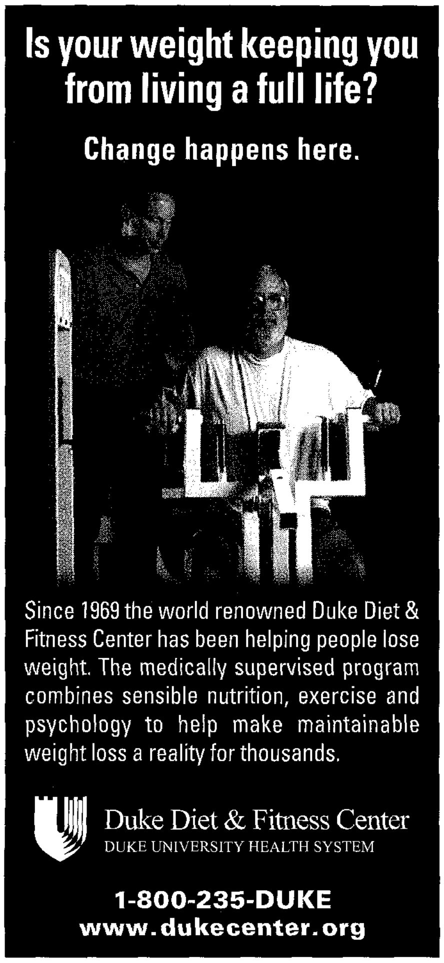
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While we're on the subject of our being staffed entirely by poorly supervised, barely screened, minimally trained temps, we would like to address the issue of colossal ineptitude in our bureau. We have been accused of undercounting certain segments of the population. This is simply not true, and we think all three of our nation's Native Americans will back us up on this. In 1990, for example, our count of people exactly matched the total population of the United States, according to Census statistics.

Here at the Census Bureau, we are always striving to give our citizens more. This year, "more" includes an extra digit added to every single street address (enjoy!). Moreover, although there are no problems with the Census, we are constantly making improvements to correct those problems. The Census after this one, for example, will represent a benchmark in accuracy and ease of use. Every citizen will be asked to purchase a hamburger from McDonald's on April 1, 2010. We will then drive over to the one in Bethesda and see how far the number has gone up.

[****Note to self—need clever but friendly close, perhaps: "We're 'counting' on you!" Make sure to replace this paragraph before mailing letter out to every single person in the U.S. Also, pick up Maxithins for Judy.*]

Sincerely,

Kenneth Prewitt
Director
Bureau of the Census ◆

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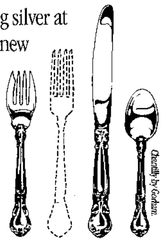

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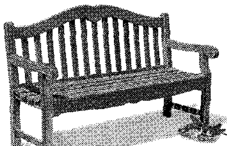

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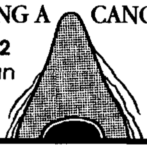

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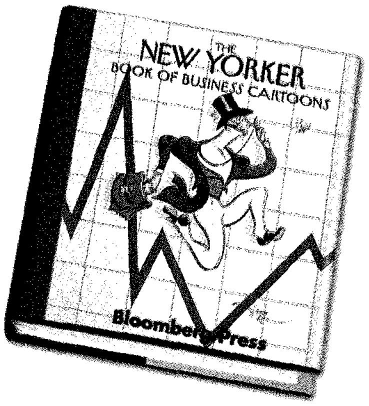

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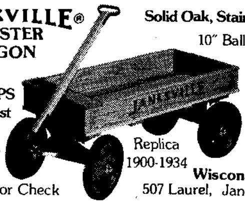

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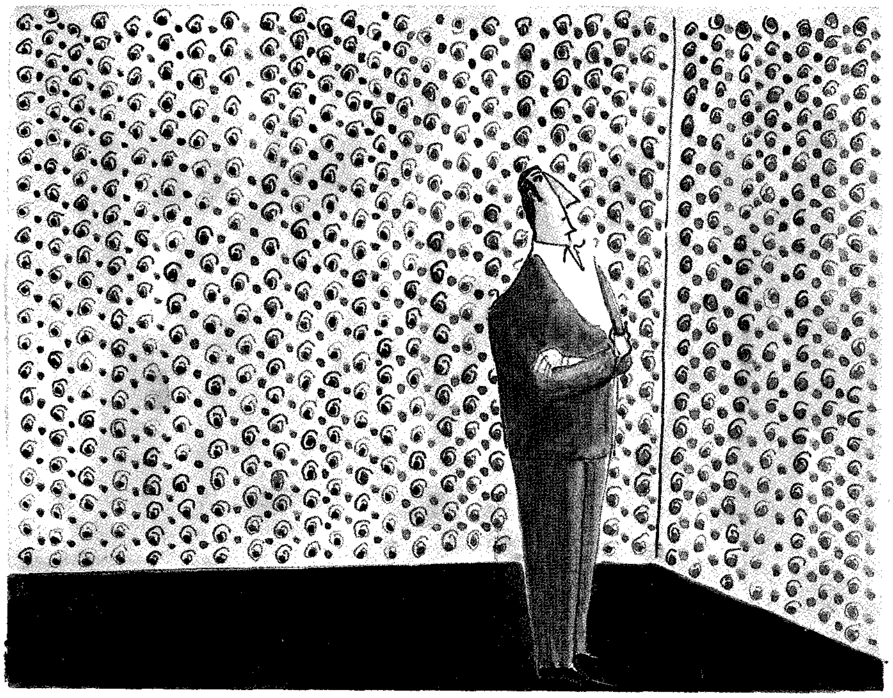
REFLECTIONS

THE DOUBTING DISEASE

When is obsession a sickness?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN



BENOÎT VAN INNIS

On a snowy Sunday in winter, I attended a conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The participants included a wide variety of scientists: molecular biologists, organic chemists, computer programmers, virologists, clinical researchers, and statisticians. Afterward, a small group of us went to dinner at a local restaurant. During the meal, the conversation turned to schooling.

"I transferred my eight-year-old out of public school last year," a chemist told the group. "The teacher wouldn't accommodate him. My kid is like me. When he has a problem to solve, he attacks it until it's done perfectly. He completely blocks out the world and won't let go. The teacher insisted that he couldn't spend more than the allotted time on a task. When my son wouldn't stop, the teacher concluded that he had a behavior disorder."

This anecdote provoked a startlingly sympathetic response around the table: most of us, it turned out, identified with the chemist's son. A biologist known for deciphering, atom by atom, the three-dimensional structure of complex proteins declared, "I bet I qualify for what psychiatrists call obsessive-compulsive disorder. When I'm reviewing lab data, and especially when I'm ready to send out a scientific paper, I keep thinking something is wrong. I become intensely anxious. I'll stay up all night reworking every graph and equation. I'm unable to get the thought out of my head that there's a mistake. Then I find myself checking other kinds of things. I'll go blocks away from the house and turn back to make sure the doors are locked, even though I know they are." He turned to the chemist. "I'm not sure what would have happened if I had had your son's teacher."

What did it mean, I wondered as I left the restaurant, that a group of prominent scientists showed at least some traits associated with a clinical disorder during periods of high anxiety? More and more American children are being diagnosed and medicated every year, and at younger and younger ages. If my colleagues and I were in school now, would we be considered abnormal?

Current estimates hold that more than two per cent of the United States population—nearly seven million people—have or have had obsessive-compulsive disorder (O.C.D.). The American Psychiatric Association classifies all known mental disorders in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, or D.S.M. Obsessive-compulsive disorder, which usually manifests itself in adolescence, is characterized by recurrent, time-consuming obsessions or compulsions that are severe enough to cause marked distress or significant impairment. Furthermore, the person recognizes that his obsessions or compulsions are excessive or unreasonable. "Obsessions" are defined in the D.S.M. as persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are experienced as intrusive, anxiety-producing, and inappropriate.

A person with such obsessions usually tries to ignore them, or to defuse them with some other thoughts or actions: this attempt defines a compulsion. You're obsessed with the thought that you didn't turn off the stove; you compulsively check to make sure it's off. (The French call O.C.D. "the doubting disease.") Other well-recognized compulsions are hand-washing, counting, or repeating special words. In its extreme form, people afflicted with O.C.D. are virtual prisoners of their compulsions—exhausted, ashamed, alienated from others. Certainly, nobody at the restaurant would have qualified for the diagnosis. Our obsessions tended to be temporary, and connected to a productive activity, like solving an equation. We may describe ourselves as "obsessive," but our obsessions don't control us.

Although there is little information about the biological roots of the disorder—some have speculated that it can follow strep infections—recent studies indicate that people with O.C.D. have distinctive neurological circuitry. These differences are most pronounced in the limbic lobe, the caudate nucleus, and the orbital frontal cortex, the areas of the brain which participate in anxiety and automatic responses. Sophisticated brain scans show that when a potentially distressing scenario is confronted by a person without O.C.D., the brain activity in these areas barely registers on the screen; in a person with O.C.D., however, there is an intense and prolonged firing of neurons, and the scans light up like a Christmas tree. The Cambridge conference left me wondering whether scientists and other driven, detail-oriented professionals could also have distinctive neurological circuitry. Or are these mildly obsessive-compulsive people more likely to be attracted to these fields?

The next day, I found myself taking another look at the familiar environment of my laboratory. In the lab—where many scientists spend ten to twelve hours each day, six to seven days a week—everything is tightly controlled. Tedious tasks demand absolute concentration, because a single error can wreck months of work. During our lab's weekly meeting, every detail of every experiment is intensely scrutinized and challenged as we search for those hidden, threatening mistakes. Is this the natural habitat of the obsessive-compulsive?

Speaking with a score of fellow-scientists throughout the week, I elicited anecdote after anecdote of mildly obsessive-compulsive behavior. One researcher said that when she approaches the lab to prepare for a particularly important experiment, she counts to herself and taps the wall as she walks down the corridor. Another "prefers" prime numbers, and counts to three or to seven before analyzing a sequence of DNA. A third told me that, during the month before her grant proposals are due, she repeatedly returns home to check the stove in her apartment, even though she knows that it is turned off.

I also looked for survey studies on personality traits of scientists, or of children and adolescents who pursue careers in high technology. I searched for published articles in the National Library of Medicine, a repository of clinical literature; I checked listings of hundreds of popular books on Internet booksellers. Nothing specifically addressed the issue. I decided that it was time to seek professional help.

"What is a disorder, anyway?" the psychologist Jane Holmes Bernstein asked me rhetorically, in an animated English accent. Holmes Bernstein is the director of the neuropsychology program at Boston's Children's Hospital,

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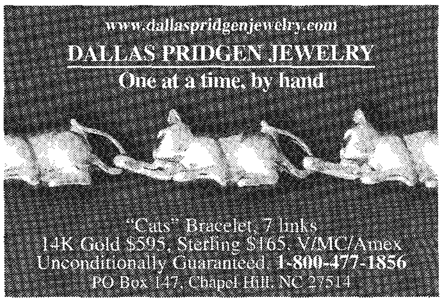

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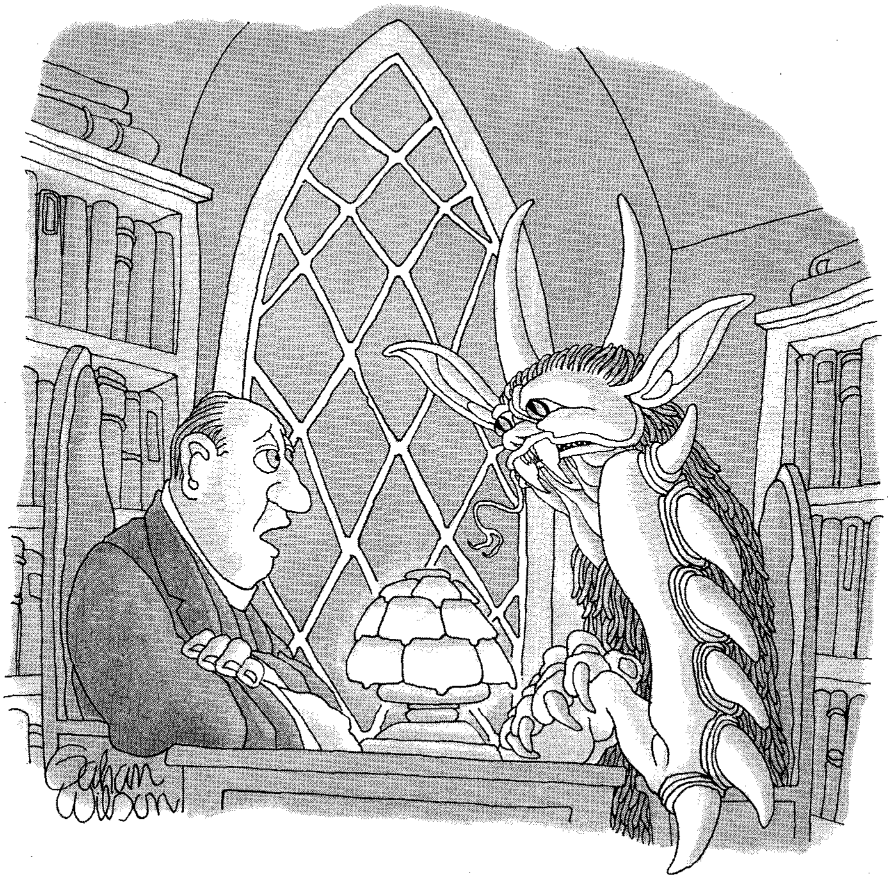
and she is an expert at behavioral assessments of children. Like most scientists, she has a healthy skepticism toward her own field: "I decided early in the game that I needed to be hit with the full battery of neuropsychiatric tests that I give to kids—that it wasn't fair unless I experienced them." One day, when she was testing a child who had been referred to her for certain learning difficulties at school, she realized that he tested exactly as she herself had. "I asked myself, 'Why am I on my side of the desk?' In my environment, I function at a high level, where it plays out adaptively."

Holmes Bernstein argues that personality and behaviors can't be considered separately from the particular worlds in which people live; for that reason, she de-emphasizes labels and focusses instead on the relationship between behavior and environment. "Many psychiatrists and psychologists fit kids into diagnostic boxes," she asserted. "This thinking begins in medical school. There is distinctive, intrinsic organic pathology, the patient put into a box labelled 'diabetes' or 'H.I.V.' But those boxes are not built for behavior, because behavior is influenced so strongly by its interaction with environment."

She suggested that O.C.D. is a response to excess arousal—arousal in this instance meaning a neurological response to environmental stimuli. "The O.C.D. neurological circuits in the limbic system are set higher for certain stimuli and can respond faster," Holmes Bernstein said. She pointed to recent studies at Indiana University which show that, under certain conditions, people with O.C.D. make associations between neutral as well as aversive stimuli more quickly than people without O.C.D.

Holmes Bernstein believes that both this high state of arousal and the anxiety it produces may have evolutionary roots. In a prehistoric environment, those with the ability to focus and lock onto stimuli—particularly onto threatening elements in the environment—could have been better suited to escape the dangers of predators and treacherous terrain. But only to a point. "An adaptive mechanism can always become non-adaptive," Holmes Bernstein said.

"This argument about the precise definition of O.C.D. is not just semantic,



"So, once again, we have agreed to disagree."

because it is the D.S.M. that dictates treatments," she went on. "Left to itself, the human animal accepts a wide range of behavior. O.C.D. becomes as much an issue of managing load in a high-stimulus environment as it is a specific neurological disorder."

After leaving Holmes Bernstein, I got in touch with Anthony Rao, a clinical psychologist who has a large community-based practice in child and adolescent psychology in the Boston area. Rao's specialty is behavioral therapy, and he regularly sees children like the chemist's son, who are brought by their parents or referred by teachers. He feels that he is constantly battling against misguided attempts to diagnose children and provide generic remedies. "There is too much pathologizing of people's behaviors," he said. "In the educational system, it's one size fits all. Teachers run to labels, like A.D.D."—attention-deficit disorder—"or O.C.D., and even tell parents their children need to start taking medication." Even among preschoolers, as a recent *Journal of the American Medical Association* study showed, there has been a sharp rise in the use of psychiatric medications, not only for A.D.D. but also for putative anxiety and depression.

What drives all this, Rao believes, is the free-floating anxiety that parents—often successful members of the middle and upper class—foist on their children. In the instability of today's global economy, they fear that any deviation from the norm may cripple their child's future. He also believes that the currently fashionable psychiatric model—the idea that the problem is "a chemical disease of the brain"—is overly simplistic and even dangerous. These days, psychiatrists primarily treat O.C.D. with selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, like Prozac and Luvox, which alleviate not only its symptoms but also the anxiety and depression that often accompany it. But Rao pointed out that no one knows precisely what the long-term effects of these drugs on children will be—"especially when they are given daily for years." This approach, he contends, is treating the brain as if it were a bad kidney, when it's a far more complex organ, one which modifies itself continually.

Rao was careful to stipulate that he does not categorically oppose medication. A child or an adolescent with O.C.D. who can't leave the house, or who can't sleep because he needs to repeatedly check under the bed, may greatly benefit from drugs. The problem is with the larger universe of kids who are summarily labelled "abnormal" and medicated. In March, the White House expressed alarm at this trend, and the National Institute of Mental Health called for new studies to assess the safety and efficacy of psychoactive drug therapy for young children.

"It's a different world in psychiatry now, with managed care," Rao went on. "In order for a psychiatrist to get paid, he needs to give you a D.S.M. diagnosis." Rao described a scenario that he often hears from clients about visits to psychiatrists: "Do you have worries? Do you have compulsive acts? Do you realize they are bothersome? Yes, yes, yes. Then it's boom-boom-boom, here's a prescription. You have O.C.D." Rao believes that the D.S.M. label resonates in the child's mind and among family members and friends in pejorative and embarrassing ways. "Your brain is your soul," Rao said fiercely. "You're telling a kid that there is something wrong with who he fundamentally is."

Rao thinks that this excess pathologizing of people's problems is strongly driven by economics: beyond the imperatives of managed care, there is a burgeoning pharmaceutical industry that reaps huge profits from psychotropic medications. Researchers have obvious incentives to conduct drug trials that will encourage the Food and Drug Administration to approve a medication for a specific D.S.M.-defined disorder. Rao, on the other hand, attempts to temper his patients' anxieties and to redirect the compulsive behavior into more productive channels.

Rao told me about a recent case of a thirteen-year-old girl whom we'll call Jan, a gifted pianist and a straight-A student. During the past year, her performance at school had plummeted. When she began to exhibit obsessive-compulsive behavior, her parents took her to a psychiatrist, who prescribed O.C.D. medication. The drugs were of little benefit, and friends and teachers began to

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treat her as though she were seriously disturbed.

The family came to Rao for a second opinion. He learned that she was haunted by thoughts of serious harm coming to her parents. To try to suppress these terrifying thoughts, she had developed a ritual of walking forward in precisely measured steps and then retracing these exact steps backward. She realized this was not rational, but she thought that walking backward would somehow undo the horrific visions of her parents in danger.

"I told her that we all have terrifying thoughts, and that it doesn't mean you are crazy," Rao said. "And I explained that her precision and analytical abilities had become diverted to these irrational interior thoughts. We worked to redirect this ability outward—back to music and to math."

The girl was weaned off medication and underwent behavioral therapy, focussing on the very thoughts that she found so disturbing. When her anxiety reached its apex, Rao coached her to wait a few moments before retreating to her ritual. This process was repeated, each time increasing the delay between the disturbing thoughts and the walking compulsion. Eventually, the debilitating cycle was broken. Now, when Jan feels anxious, she practices the technique that Rao taught her. Her school work is again outstanding, and she continues to play the piano. Some studies show that such behavioral therapy can be as effective as medication in overcoming obsessions and compulsions.

On the other hand, Rao pointed out, distress is an unavoidable dimension of human experience. "Struggle over suffering and pain is necessary for development," he said. "If you ignore this, or try to medicate it away, then a person doesn't develop skills to deal with life."

In order to better understand a different point of view, I sought out Dr. Joseph Biederman in his office at the Massachusetts General Hospital. He is a professor of psychiatry at Harvard and chief of the joint program in pediatric psychopharmacology at Massachusetts General and McLean Hospital.

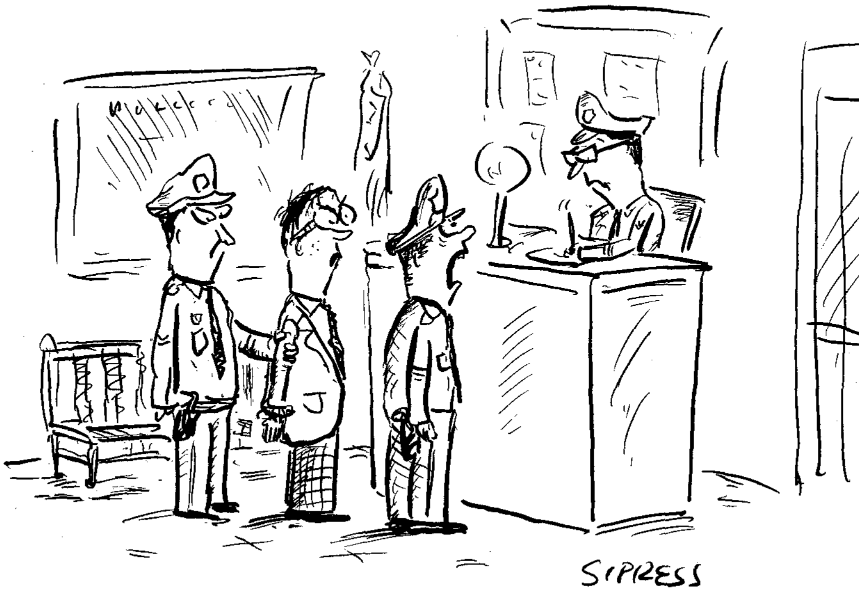
Biederman rejects the contention of behavioral psychologists like Anthony Rao that children and adolescents are overdiagnosed because of the exigencies of H.M.O.s or the incentives of drug companies. Nor does he think that overzealous teachers are to blame. "The schools are not failing when they insist that a child cannot endlessly obsess over some task," he said. "That's the response of a classically narcissistic parent—the child is an extension of himself, and it's the environment that must change."

Biederman also finds this response to O.C.D. naïve. "These are disruptions of normal brain functions—the diseased limbic loops are organic, not philosophical. It's a pathological state." It was not to be confused with, say, the behavior of a basketball player who mumbles things to himself before a free throw, or a pitcher who wears a special undershirt on the mound. "That's primitive, magical thinking that doesn't really interfere with functioning." Biederman illustrated his point by likening O.C.D. to high blood pressure or high cholesterol: there are well-defined limits beyond which disease occurs.

"As a doctor, you see a patient with high cholesterol, and you tell him to lose weight, exercise, restrict his fat intake. Rarely can anyone do this," he said. So a doctor will prescribe medication. "Do you want to walk from Boston to New York City, or take a plane? Behavioral therapy is the most laborious form of treatment—it's walking. Medication gets you there quickly." He went on, "What we need is a screwdriver for the brain, in order to fine-tune the limbic circuit just enough so that it works efficiently and doesn't get stuck."

But isn't that measurement of efficiency a highly subjective one? "Even minor illness deserves aggressive treatment," Dr. Biederman replied. "Treat early, at the first sign, when a person is still functional. Those early indicators are what I call kindling—you want to intervene when the fire is just beginning, not let it spread." After all, what he and the psychologists had in common, he said, was the goal of alleviating pain. "These people with O.C.D. are suffering, experiencing distress, in a state of hyperarousal. Without drugs, they can't enjoy life."

I also spoke to Dr. Judith Rapoport, the chief of child psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health, in Bethesda, Maryland. Dr. Rapoport, who helped bring O.C.D. to the public's at-



"Next thing we knew, he started subjecting us to all this harsh, unfair criticism."

• •

tention eleven years ago with her book "The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing," emphasized that exact terms should be used in any discussion of the disorder. "I see the kids whose lives are wrecked by intrusive thoughts and uncontrolled compulsions," she said. "The D.S.M. criteria are carefully constructed around degree of function.

"Your scientist friends are not the kind of people referred to me," Rapoport went on. She believes that these scientists more closely resemble an alternative D.S.M. diagnosis, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (O.C.P.D.). The D.S.M. criteria here emphasize excessive devotion to work and perfectionism. A person with O.C.P.D. relentlessly engages in work, to the exclusion of social pleasures.

Other experts in the field believe that the lines are more difficult to draw. Dr. John Ratey and Catherine Johnson, in their 1997 book, "Shadow Syndromes," argue that many obsessive people do not clearly fit D.S.M. criteria for O.C.D. or O.C.P.D. Further, of all the shadow syndromes, "mild obsessive-compulsive disorder is perhaps the one constellation of mood and thought society cannot do without." What links the compulsions is the fear of shame upon failing in public—the scientist who emerges from his laboratory to present his data, the pianist at each recital in the concert hall. "This is the intersection of shadow syndrome and normalcy," Ratey and Johnson argue. "Obsession can drive ambition—and when it does, obsession becomes a useful quality to possess."

Late one evening, I called Laurence Lasky, a nationally renowned molecular biologist, to discuss my findings with him. I was not surprised to find that he was still in his lab at Genentech, a biotechnology company in the Bay Area. Lasky agreed that laboratory researchers, himself included, exhibit traits that are distributed toward the far end of the bell-shaped curve of obsessions and compulsions. "As an adolescent, I had this compulsive habit of tapping and drumming on tables, walls, my books," he told me. "It drove my mother crazy. I needed to do it to burn off my anxiety. As I grew older, it went away." Lasky still lives with anxiety, but he said that there is a huge payoff from all this tension.

"There is nothing like making a discovery—the feeling of seeing something in the laboratory for the first time," Lasky said. "But no good scientist I know is ever completely satisfied. What does a Nobel laureate do when he wins? He tries to win again. If you're not first, and you're not right, you're nowhere." I asked Lasky if he would want to be medicated for his anxiety. Absolutely not, he replied. "Who says advancing science has anything to do with being happy?" ♦

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THE PHARMAGEDDON RIDDLE

Did Monsanto just want more profits, or did it want to save the world?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Each fall, the environmental group Greenpeace holds a conference, in an effort to make its priorities as clear to corporate executives and investors as they are to its two and a half million members. The gathering, at a London hotel, is a chance for one of the world's most determined environmental organizations to remind skeptics about its goals, and to let people know what it is willing to do to achieve them. For its latest event, in October, the organizers had scheduled appearances by the two principal antagonists in one of the most unsettling issues of our age: the production and use of genetically modified foods.

No controversy—nuclear power, global warming, or even the eerie possibility of cloning human beings—occupies a larger space in that disturbing arena where science, social values, and commerce collide. Lord Peter Melchett, an organic farmer and a former Labour minister, who has led Greenpeace's efforts to stop the use of biotechnology in agriculture, was enlisted to debate Robert B. Shapiro, the chairman and C.E.O. of the international conglomerate Monsanto, who is the technology's chief evangelist. It was a perfect moment for such a conversation: genetically modified foods, with few labels to identify them, have become the most widely adopted products in modern farming history. A decade ago, no transgenic crops were commercially available anywhere on earth; in 1995, four million acres had been planted; by 1999, that number had grown to a hundred million. In the United States, half of the enormous soybean crop and more than a third of the corn are the products of biotechnology.

Shapiro believes that altering the seeds of soybeans, beets, and cotton to resist herbicides is the barest beginning of what he and many others consider a revolution in agriculture, food, and, ultimately, human health. This new science, he says, is the principal reason that "there now exists an opportunity to create a genuine science of nutrition, something that has never existed in human history." But, where Monsanto sees unlimited promise, Greenpeace has found little more than profit motive and peril. In Europe, and particularly in the United Kingdom, opposition to agricultural biotechnology has become almost a religion—one endorsed vigorously by Prince Charles. "I happen to believe that this kind of genetic modification takes mankind into realms that belong to God, and to God alone," he has said. Lord Melchett, for his part, will stand trial this week for mowing down an experimental government crop of genetically modified maize, in Norfolk, not far from his estate.

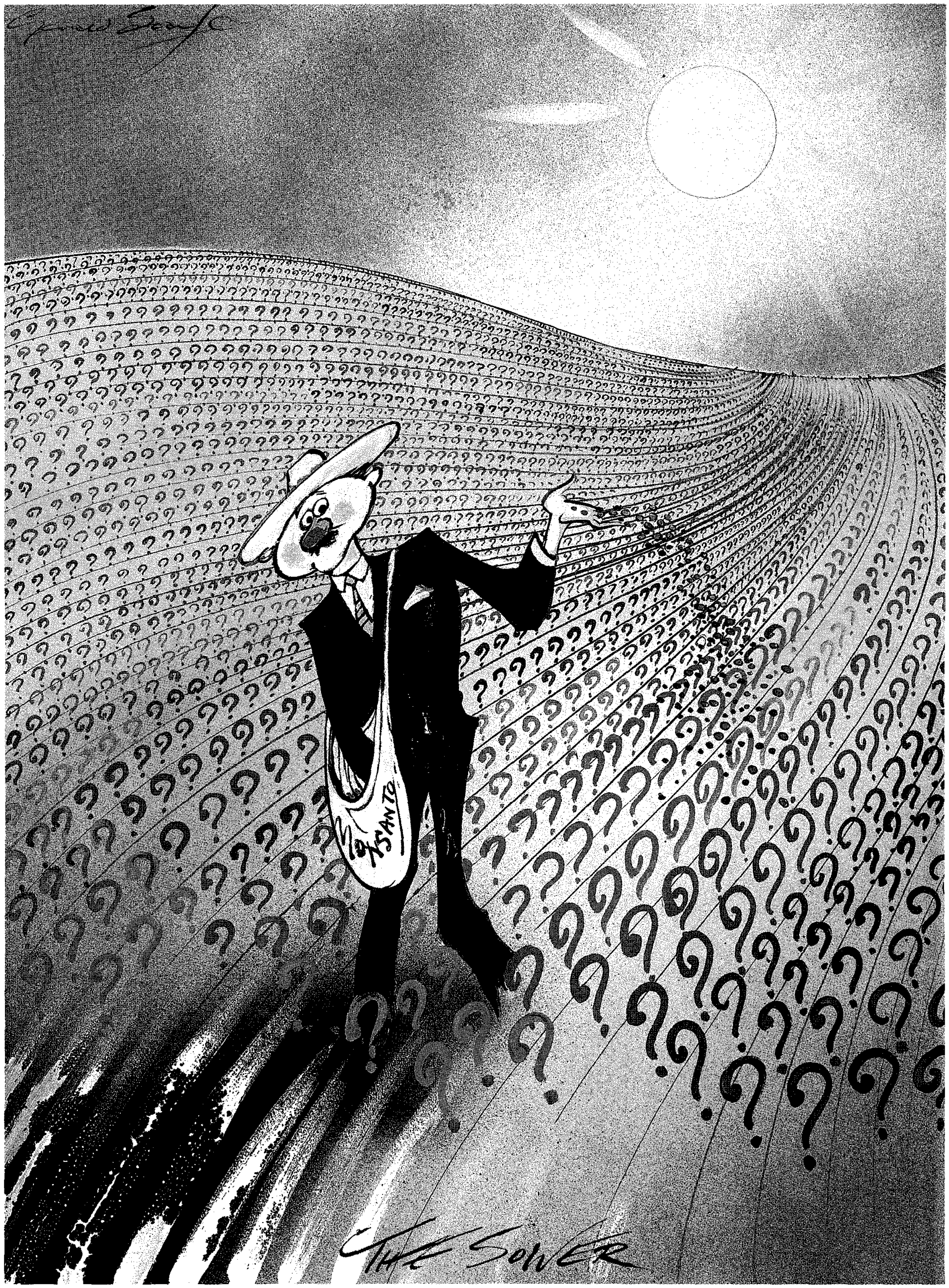
Just a few days before the conference, Shapiro called to say that he couldn't make it. Instead, his image was beamed from America onto a video screen. Shapiro appeared grim, defensive, and defeated. After more than a year of protests, Europe was shutting Monsanto out of its markets. So, for the most part, was Brazil. Two of Monsanto's biggest competitors—the Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis and the British drugmaker AstraZeneca—were about to combine their agricultural divisions into one business and sell it, essentially abandoning their involvement in crop biotechnology. Japanese companies had decided to stop using genetically altered products, and Mexico's largest tortilla-maker had ended its reliance on modified corn. Under pressure from Greenpeace, Novartis stopped using gene-modified soy and corn in its Gerber brand of baby food. Heinz announced it would do the same.

By last fall, the tension in Europe had spread to America. A highly publicized—though very preliminary—report from a researcher at Cornell suggested that the eggs of monarch butterflies (the great fluttering pandas of the insect world) might not survive on the pollen of modified corn. American farmers began to fear that European ports would send their tankers full of grain back to sea, and late last summer the world's most prominent miller—Archer Daniels Midland—instructed its confused and disheartened clients to segregate modified crops from all others and haul them to market in separate containers. In November, the Food and Drug Administration was set to begin its first full series of hearings on the use and safety of genetically altered foods.

Shapiro's faith in the technology remained absolute, though. He told the Greenpeace audience that without biotechnology farmers would never meet the world's rapidly growing demand for food. At the same time, Shapiro was surprisingly contrite, sounding like one of those Chinese leaders who during the Cultural Revolution were made to walk through the streets in a dunce cap. "Our confidence in this technology and our enthusiasm for it has, I think, widely been seen, and understandably so, as condescension or indeed arrogance," he said. "Because we thought it was our job to persuade, too often we forgot to listen."

Lord Melchett didn't know how to respond, so he delivered his prepared remarks. He said that Greenpeace was ready to join arms with Monsanto if only the corporation would renounce its use of agricultural biotechnology and embrace organic farming as the principal solution to the world's crop needs. It was a bit like offering moral support to General Motors, if only the automobile-maker would abandon the internal-combustion engine in favor of the bicycle. At one point, Shapiro was asked if he felt like a bully imposing unwanted foods upon the

GERALD SCARFE


MONSANTO
THE SOWER

To opponents, Monsanto has become a cauldron of evil, a place where people have manipulated nature to create "frankenfoods."

Handelsman

"And now, if I may, I'd like to put You on hold for a moment while I have a few words with Mammon."

world. "Well, if I'm a bully," he replied dryly, "I certainly don't feel myself to be successful at it."

The Monsanto Company, which was founded in St. Louis in 1901, became one of the world's most successful chemical concerns, starting out with products like saccharin, aspirin, acrylic, and fertilizers, and eventually selling PCBs, plastics, dioxin, and the defoliant Agent Orange. When Robert Shapiro took control of the company, in 1995, it had more than twenty thousand employees in dozens of countries. Shapiro quickly made it clear that he intended to start over. Within three years, the company had spun off its chemical operations and committed itself to biotechnology and a cleaner world. Its new, officially stated goal was to help people "lead longer, healthier lives, at costs that they and their nations can afford and without continued environmental degradation."

Monsanto's herbicide Roundup has been one of its best-selling products for more than twenty-five years. In 1996, the company introduced Roundup Ready seeds, which were engineered to resist the herbicide, and the seeds have dominated every market in which they are sold. Under Shapiro's direction, Monsanto established marketing agreements with some of its largest competitors in the seed business; in other cases, it simply bought the company. In 1996, Monsanto and DeKalb Genetics signed a contract to share the licensing of corn and soybean seeds; the same year, Monsanto bought Agracetus, a cotton-and-plant biotechnology company. In 1997, Monsanto purchased the soybean company Asgrow Agronomics and Holden's Foundation Seeds. Monsanto also formed partnerships with the giant grain company Cargill and with Millennium Pharmaceuticals, which specializes in genomics and gene-sequencing technology. By last year, after an eight-billion-dollar spree, Monsanto had made a greater commitment to producing genetically modified crops than any other organization in the world. It seemed like a wise investment. Monsanto was not only leading the race for new genetically engineered foods but its stock price had doubled. Most analysts on Wall Street predicted that the growth would continue.

Shapiro, who is sixty-one, had ambitions that extended far beyond selling seed to farmers. When he took over the company, he had looked at the four main strands of its business—agriculture, pharmaceuticals, food, and chemicals—and decided that by abandoning chemicals he could combine the other parts into one. More clearly than his competitors, he understood that common foods could reduce cholesterol, that fruits could be turned into life-saving vaccines, and that genetics could improve the staples that millions rely on for daily sustenance. A lawyer and a former urban-affairs professor, Shapiro had become the unlikely Johnny Appleseed of genetic modification, promoting his vision of a world where there are not simply foods and drugs but foods that take the place of drugs. "This is an important moment in human history," Shapiro told me the first time we met, in Monsanto's offices at Chicago's Merchandise Mart. "The application of contemporary biological knowledge to issues like food and nutrition and human health has to occur. It has to occur for the same reasons that things have occurred for the past ten millennia. People want to live better, and they will use the tools they have to do it. Biology is the best tool we have."

In some ways, the shift wasn't all that profound: for centuries, farmers have been saving seeds and breeding them over generations to make better plants. All the plants we eat (corn, wheat, potatoes, rice) and many that we don't (orchids, roses, Christmas trees) have been manipulated in an effort to make them last longer, flower later, look better, taste sweeter, or grow more vigorously in stubborn soil. (Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and kale, for example, all come from the same wild ancestor, although hundreds of years of breeding have turned them into four entirely different foods.) In the nineteenth century, Luther Burbank, America's first great plant breeder, spent his life crossing the seedlings of plants in order to create hybrids robust enough to thrive. Gregor Mendel's experiments with peas started to change all that. He proved that there was a system to inheritance. Some traits are more powerful than others, and those always win out.

But modern agriculture, modern medicine, and the information society itself didn't really begin until 1953, when James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of the DNA molecule, which carries the information that cells need to build proteins, and to live. Today, it's as if scientists in half the laboratories on earth spent their time cutting bits of DNA from one cell and splicing them into others. Nature may be random, but genetic modification allows plant breeders to be specific.

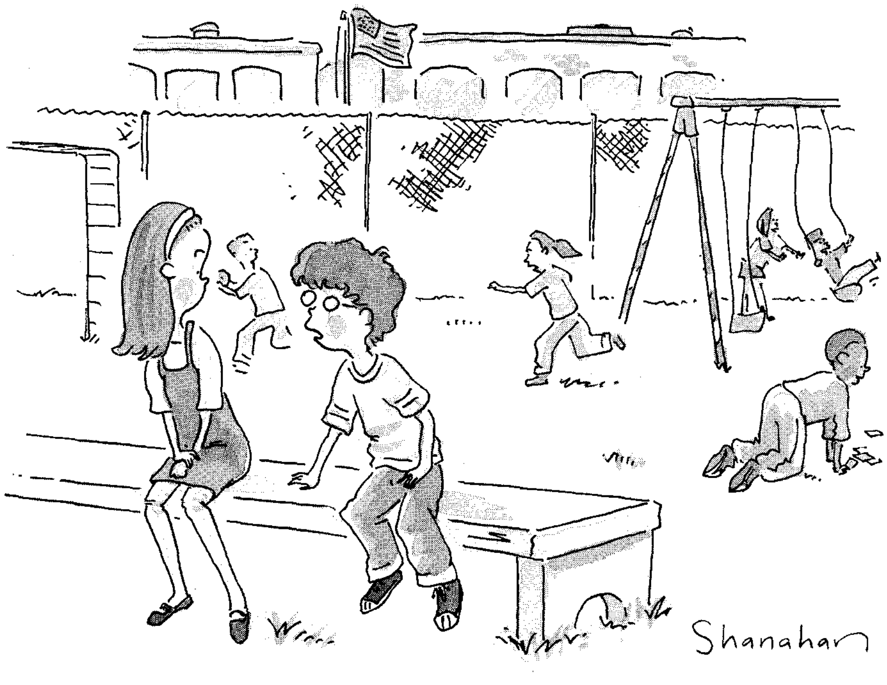
This type of manipulation has long been accepted in medicine, largely because the risks seem well contained and the benefits easy to understand. Insulin produced since 1983, for example, has been largely based on a synthetic gene that is a replica of one found in humans. Yet playing with the molecular foundations of the food supply has seemed to many people like the agricultural equivalent of cloning a lamb—it crosses some unacceptable boundary. It is one thing to mix different varieties of potato or cassava, but researchers have now advanced genetics to a point where they have implanted specific genes from a fish that can swim comfortably in the icy Atlantic into the cells of others that cannot, and even, in experiments, into a strawberry, in order to help it ward off a frost. For some people, that's taking science a step too far.

Even many of those who believe in biotechnology are plainly afraid of it, especially in Europe, which has always been more skeptical about genetic research than America. To critics, the technology seemed to embody the worst excesses of American industry—fancy gadgets that solve no problems. Worse than seeming gimmicky, however, the technology was usually invisible. "If Monsanto had spent a lot of money and produced an egg with no cholesterol, I just don't think we would be having these problems today," Michael Lipton, an economist at the Poverty Research Unit of the University of Sussex, told me. Lipton is an expert on nutrition, farming, and demographics in the Third World, and believes that genetically modified products will help feed the world. "I always say that electricity is a fantastic invention," he continued, "but if the first two products had been the electric chair and the cattle prod, I doubt that most consumers would have seen the point."

The fear and the hope surrounding biotechnology are very much on display in Basel, a tidy, conservative city dominated by the pharmaceutical company Novartis. Not long ago, I had lunch in a company dining room there. A card was placed at every plate. On one side there was a color picture of an ear of rich, golden corn. On the back was a photograph of an ear of corn whose kernels were mossy and white. This corn was infected with a particularly hideous mycotoxin fungus, a disease that genetically modified corn is engineered to prevent. "This maize-product you are eating today is specially cooked for you and contains Bt corn from Germany," the card said, referring to corn that had been genetically modified with a bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensus*, and continued, "We should talk more about the real benefits of Bt corn than of potential negative effects for tomorrow."

The corn tasted fine, and shortly after lunch I met with the Novartis chairman and C.E.O., Daniel Vasella, a physician who is one of agricultural biotechnology's most eloquent supporters and one of Switzerland's most well-known corporate leaders. Vasella is an open man with an ever-present smile, but, when I asked him why he had decided to stop using genetically modified ingredients in Gerber baby food, he seemed tense. "We are not missionaries," Vasella said. "We sell things. No company can prosper by telling customers what is good for them." He went on, "This is not just about plants. It's about our myths, our history and culture. It's about what we put in our mouths and in our babies' mouths. When you go to somebody's house, they offer you food. That is a ritual of every life. What is more basic—and what could be more frightening—than playing with that? Of course, it scares people. How could something this important *not* scare people?"

Monsanto's success in altering the food supply had played into this fear and reinforced an image that Shapiro has worked tirelessly to shed, especially in Europe, where the company is seen as a symbol of corporate imperialism. Supporters of genetically modified agricul-



"Recess does things to a man."

ture like to stress the technology's potential to address hunger and disease, but Europeans are not hungry. What they initially got were herbicides they didn't want and long-lasting tomatoes they didn't need. Nor did it help that in 1998 Monsanto had tried to introduce its products to a continent still recovering from the shock of mad-cow disease, when signs of opposition to novel foods, and to science itself, were everywhere.

To its opponents, Monsanto has become a cauldron of evil—a place where people have manipulated nature to create grotesque "frankenfoods," which they have shoved down millions of unsuspecting throats. "This whole world view, that genetically modified food is there so we have no choice but to use it, is absolutely terrifying," Lord Melchett told me. "And it is wrong. There is a fundamental question here: Is progress really just about marching forward? We say no. We say it is time to stop assuming that discoveries only move us forward. The war against nature has to end. And we are going to stop it."

EMPATHY

Once in a small rented room, awaiting
a night call from a distant time zone,
I understood you could feel so futureless
you'd want to get a mermaid

tattooed on your biceps. Company
forever. Flex and she'd dance.
The phone never rang, except for those
phantom rings, which I almost answered.

I was in D.C., on leave from the Army.
It was a woman, of course, who didn't call.
Or, as we said back then, a girl.
It's anybody's story.

But I think for me it was the beginning
of empathy, not a large empathy
like the deeply selfless might have,
more like a leaning, like being able

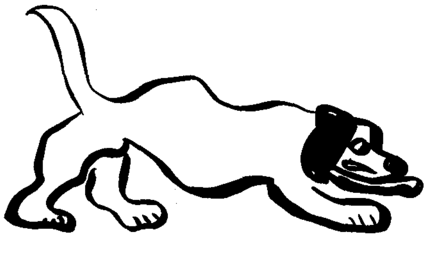
to imagine a life for a spider, a maker's
life, or just some aliveness
in its wide abdomen and delicate spinnerets
so you take it outside in two paper cups

instead of stepping on it.
The next day she called, and it was final.

Genetically modified plants have been around since the early eighties. There was opposition from the start, but the movement was never particularly strong until, on March 3, 1998, a patent was issued jointly to the United States Department of Agriculture and to the Delta & Pine Land Company, of Scott, Mississippi, America's biggest cottonseed producer. The patent's title—"Control of plant gene expression"—was too bland to draw much attention, but Monsanto noticed. So did the Rural Advancement Foundation International, an environmental organization, based in Canada, that monitors the loss of genetic diversity. The patent presented the best evidence yet that agricultural biotechnology could harness and reroute the basic elements of life. It also presented the dangers of doing so, and crystallized, as nothing had before, the deep emotions associated with this powerful new tool.

The patent refers to a set of molecular "switches" that can turn genes essential for reproduction on and off. The final step is particularly ingenious: a plant is forced to make a toxic protein that will sterilize its seeds after it is fully grown. In a brilliant stroke of public relations, the Rural Advancement Foundation International called the new gene the Terminator, after the robotic killer played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, and sterile-seed technology quickly became a potent symbol for how genetically modified crops could cause a break in nature. Worse than that, such seeds could threaten more than a billion poor people throughout the developing world, for whom saving harvested seeds is essential.

Commercial farmers in America and Europe, by contrast, rely on hybrid seeds, whose vigor diminishes in every generation; to get the best possible crop, farmers must buy new seeds every year. For companies like Monsanto, the benefits seemed obvious. The ability to shut off a seed at the end of the year restricts its use, and permits a company to protect it as intellectual property. Just as those cumbersome registration codes on computer software are intended to make it impossible for friends to swap copies of Microsoft Word or Lotus Notes, this would mean that a buyer could use the altered seed only once.



In addition, the technology has the potential to address a worrisome environmental issue: since such seeds can end a plant's life cycle, they may insure that unwanted traits do not cross-pollinate and spread to other species. The technology would also permit a producer to load a variety of characteristics into a seed; corn, for example, could have switches to fight drought or repel frost or kill a pest, like the often devastating European corn borer that appears every few seasons. Depending on the crop, the season, and the location of the fields, the technology could offer protection from the sun, or help the seed absorb its rays. A farmer could decide how much he wanted to pay for such a seed in the same way

I remember going to the zoo
and staring a long time

at the hippopotamus, its enormous weight
and mass, its strange appearance
of tranquillity.
And then the sleek, indignant cats.

Then I went back to Fort Jackson.
I had a calendar taped inside my locker,
and I'd circle days for which I
had no plans, not even hopes—

big circles, so someone might ask.
It was between wars. Only the sergeants
and a few rawboned farm boys
took learning how to kill seriously.

We had to traverse the horizontal ladder,
rung after rung, to pass
into mess hall. Always the weak-handed,
the weak-armed, couldn't make it.

I looked for those who didn't laugh
at those of us who fell.
In the barracks, after drills,
the quiet fellowship of the fallen.

—*Stephen Dunn*

that an air traveller chooses a ticket. In theory, you would get what you paid for.

Deploying genes in this way would essentially turn something physical into something intellectual, and that, Shapiro argues, is what the world today is all about. "The historical model, the industrial-revolution model we live by now, says that our quality of life has to do with possession of things, of stuff," he told me one day as we talked in his office. "But it turns out that information doesn't occupy a lot of stuff and can create enormous value." As he spoke, he waved his arms so energetically that he knocked the glasses from his face. "Biotech is a subset of information technology. It's a way of encoding information in nucleic acids as opposed to encoding it in charged silicon. It's a way to create value without creating more stuff. I put a gene, which is information, into a cottonseed, and I don't have to spray stuff on the crop in order to control insects. That strategy strikes me as the right one for agriculture, just as it strikes me as the right one for post-industrial society."

In May of 1998, Monsanto offered $1.9 billion for Delta and its vast cottonseed business. The strategy made perfect sense for a company aggressively pursuing every aspect of agricultural biotechnology, and every way to protect its inventions. But the Terminator seed also turned Monsanto, and its chairman, into even bigger targets.

People at Monsanto have never seemed to understand why the company has been damaged so badly in the public-relations war over biotechnology when other companies, such as Novartis and DuPont, have largely escaped the punishment. (They might have asked Greenpeace. "Of all the companies in this business," Lord Melchett told me, "Monsanto is the most committed to agricultural biotechnology. They are no worse than DuPont. But DuPont can survive without genetically modified organisms, and I don't think Monsanto can. So we have had an opportunity with them that we did not have with anyone else.") The skittishness was evident throughout the company headquarters, in a sprawling complex in suburban St. Louis. Giant tunnels and perfectly trimmed paths connect the buildings; the place has a grim feeling, like a hospital. Although people were helpful and frank, you could see apprehension in their eyes. When I tried to bring a camera on a tour of an experimental greenhouse, permission was refused; when I met with an allergy researcher to talk about his work in genetics, he immediately mentioned poor morale, public rancor, and layoffs.

Shapiro was not in town. Although Monsanto headquarters are in St. Louis, he lives in Chicago, with his second wife and their two children, who are two and four. Shapiro's advisers had told him to stay out of the public eye, and he was difficult to reach, until one day an E-mail popped onto my computer screen telling me that, "in view of the confusion" that had characterized my attempts to see him, Shapiro wanted to make sure I knew how to find him. From that day, Shapiro—who has a reputation for being remote—became the most accessible person at Monsanto. He always replied to mail on the day it was sent, often within minutes. "As you can probably tell," he wrote in one message to me, "I'm less busy than the media accounts might have you believe."

Shapiro is one of America's best-paid executives. He earned nearly twenty million dollars in 1998, and more the year before. The three words I most often heard from employees and friends to describe him were "cold," "brilliant," and "intimidating." He can be all those things. Still, it would be hard to find a more unlikely symbol of American agriculture—or of corporate power. A thin, almost painfully contemplative Jew from the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Shapiro dresses in oversized designer sweaters and baggy, rumpled pants; he wears a tie about five times a year and appears to regret it each time. He seems almost uncomfortable with his power and influence.

Shapiro attended the Hunter School and Horace Mann and then joined the second class of students admitted directly to Harvard College as sophomores, in 1956. "That was a mistake," he told me. "There were twelve of us. And

I was immediately intellectually over my head, which is something that I couldn't quite admit to myself or to anyone else. I was used to being in places where I could be a star, and Harvard is the big leagues and I didn't feel like a star." Shapiro taught himself to play guitar and found refuge in music. "I was doing folk stuff back in the days when it was pretty cool to do," he said, smiling at the memory. "I was literally sitting in cafés and doing small shows all around New England." (Shapiro has two older children, from his first marriage, who took the music gene one step farther and started Veruca Salt, which, until it disbanded two years ago, was one of the Midwest's most successful alternative-rock bands.)

Shapiro displayed the type of political leanings one would expect from a child of West End Avenue. He protested the war in Vietnam and—like "the rest of my generation"—was not fond of chemical companies or of giant companies in general. I wondered what had brought an antiwar activist, who seems even now to have more in common with Joni Mitchell than with John Mitchell, to the leadership of a multinational corporation. "You mean when did I fall?" he asked, laughing.

After Harvard, Shapiro attended Columbia University Law School and stayed on to teach there. He became interested in urban problems and held jobs in the Johnson Administration, including one as a special assistant to the Under-Secretary of Transportation. He watched, first hand, as the Great Society failed to deliver on its promise, and he began to sense that government was not going to cure the world's ills. He returned to teaching for a while, at Northeastern, and then at the University of Wisconsin, before spending several years as general counsel at the General Instrument Corporation, which his father ran. In 1979, he moved to the pharmaceutical company G. D. Searle, as its general counsel. Shapiro, who loves games—he was for years obsessed with the Japanese board game Go—at first saw corporate life as a giant puzzle. "It was the best game I'd ever seen," he told me. "It was the most complicated game. It had so many moving parts and so many different kinds of skills you had to have in order to make it work. It took me a while to realize that this is not a game. This is one of the realest things you get to do in life."

He learned that in 1982, when he became the head of the NutraSweet operation at Searle. "One of the moments in my evolution that I will always remember is after we had launched the product, and I was feeling really good because it seemed to be succeeding," he said. "It was the first business I'd ever been given a chance to try to create, and it was working well. So I was feeling proud of myself. But then I began getting letters from kids and from parents of kids, mostly diabetics, who had never before been able to have something like Kool-Aid or Jell-O. And I realized what was going on. We were doing something important for people. It wasn't just making a handheld calculator, as we had done in my previous incarnation. This thing actually mattered.

"That did it for me," he continued. "I mean, look, I am very well compensated, and I like that. It's nice to have some of the perks that make life easier. It is even nice when you talk with people that they probably laugh at your jokes more than you deserve because of who you are. But the thing I never would have guessed about this job is that it gives you a chance to make a difference in the world. When you go home at night and you talk to your family about what you're working on, it isn't like 'Gee, I designed a really cool paper clip today.' It's about the earth, it's about the environment, it's about food. It's about health and nutrition. Those are deep, ancient things for civilization, and they are for the people."

At that point, Shapiro stopped talking, because he was fighting back tears. It was our first meeting, and I wondered if this reserved and powerful corporate leader was acting. After a few moments, he apologized. "You asked me before how this makes me feel," he said, referring to the very personal opposition that he and Monsanto face almost every day. "There are two things that most of us feel. We feel hurt, and we feel angry." Later, he added to that: "We were really proud to get out front the way we did"—with biotechnology. "In retrospect, it seems incredibly naïve, but it's the truth. We had real leadership; we had worked hard to do it. We had shown faith in this science when others were dubious,

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SHOWCASE BY WILLIAM KLEIN

RISING SON

The arrangements on Femi Kuti's new record, "Shoki, Shoki"—soaring horns, taut guitars, and half-spoken vocals—are a form of birthright. Femi is the oldest son of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the Nigerian bandleader, saxophonist, and activist who blueprinted the music known as Afro-Beat in the late sixties. Until his death, from AIDS, in 1997, Fela offered up a steady stream of resistance, musical and otherwise, to the oppressive Nigerian government, which responded with repeated jailings and beatings.

It's not easy to shine in the shadow of a dead father, especially one who has been deified. But, unlike such would-be messiahs as Julian Lennon and Ziggy Marley, Femi has the advantage of experience—at thirty-seven, he has spent half his life onstage—and of irrefutable talent. In comparing father and son, critics have seized mostly on matters of appetite. Fela was famous for his 1978 mass marriage, to twenty-seven brides. Femi has one wife. Fela smoked marijuana almost non-stop. Femi does not use the drug. The musical contrasts are subtler. While Fela recorded sprawling, jazzy anthems, Femi's dance-pop-influenced songs are concise and eclectic, and he forsakes journalistically specific jeremiads for generic anthems about sex ("Beng Beng Beng") and empowerment ("Blackman Know Yourself").

In 1998, Nigeria's military leaders banned "Beng Beng Beng" for its sexual content. When the country returned to civilian rule, many expected the ban to be lifted. It was not. The new President, General Olusegun Obasanjo, headed the Nigerian regime in 1977, when soldiers raided Fela's compound, cracked his skull, and threw his mother out a window. Governments, it seems, have birthrights, too.

—Ben Greenman

CONTACT PRESS

and it all seemed to be working. So we painted a big bull's-eye on our chest, and we went over the top of the hill."

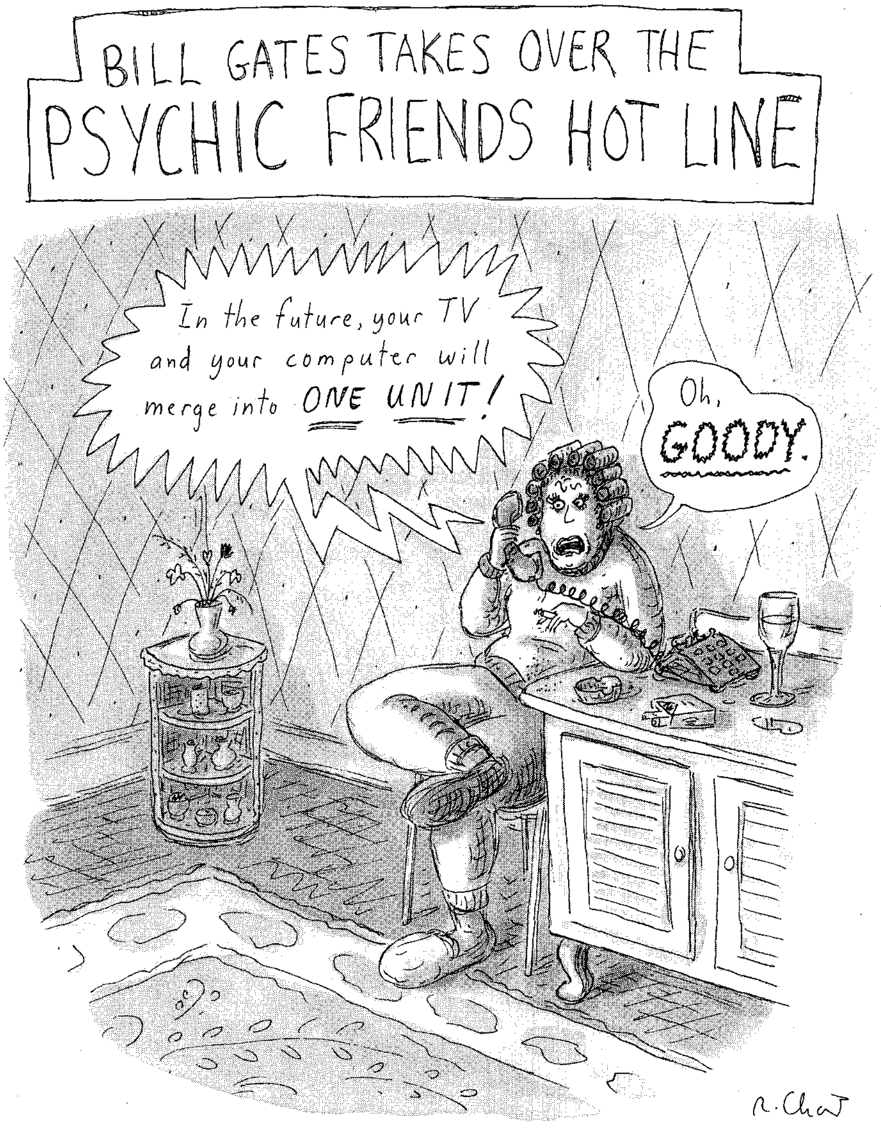
In 1997, not long after Roundup Ready canola began to be planted widely, a farmer in Canada reported that some seeds had "escaped" and cross-pollinated with a related species of weeds which was growing on the edge of his fields. DNA testing proved him right, and genetically modified agriculture had produced its own public aberration: a hybrid "superweed" that included the genes engineered specifically to make a plant resistant to herbicides. If resistant crops managed to cross with nearby weeds, then herbicides—like Roundup—would become useless.

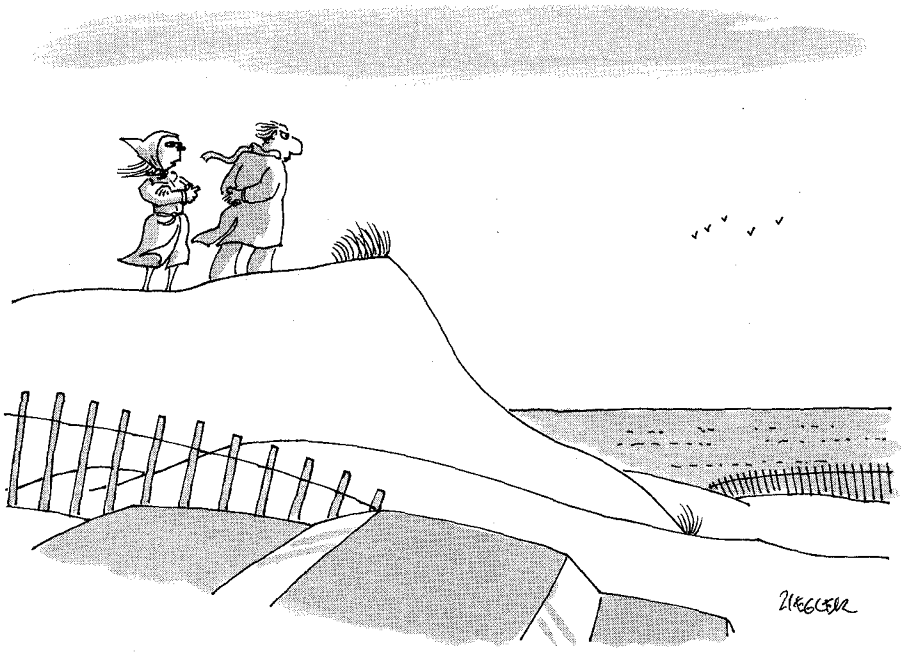
This kind of pollution did not start with modified seeds, and it is not likely to become a threat in the developed world, because most major crops have few relatives nearby. Yet the possibility that modified genes can "escape" and cross with neighbors in the fields has led to much discussion about the risks of moving DNA between species. The basic genetic structures of most species, even of species as apparently remote from each other as humans and, say, lettuce, have far more similarities than differences. Yet, when you move DNA from one species to another, there is always a possibility that the new combination will act unpredictably.

"I'm not going to tell you that an alien wave of superweeds will take over the planet," Rebecca J. Goldburg, a senior scientist at the activist organization Environmental Defense, told me. "I'm not going to tell you we can't address the problem. But we don't really know what the problem is. And we are moving ahead so rapidly in thousands of ways with so many genes and so many products. And I do worry how you can accurately balance the risks, because we don't have the right information."

With the tremendous rush to market genetically modified seeds—nearly two billion dollars' worth were sold last year—many biologists worry that there still isn't enough known about transgenic crops. Many varieties of corn, tomatoes, soybean, and squash have been approved for unlimited use, and by some estimates there are now thought to be thirty thousand products made from modified crops. Anyone who has dipped sushi in soy sauce, eaten bread, pasta, ice cream, candy, or processed meats (not to mention cornflakes) has almost certainly consumed genetically modified food. And the speed with which the products have entered our lives concerns many people. "So confident are the technicians of the safety of their products that each one is seen as no more than an arbitrary mix of independent lengths of DNA," the popular British geneticist Steve Jones writes. "Their view takes no account of the notion of species as interacting groups of genes, the properties of one . . . depending upon the others with which it is placed." Virus-resistant crops, for example, contain viral genes in all their cells. But viruses can introduce genetic material to their host cells, which means that these crops may, in theory, be able to create new diseases rather than defend against them.

Jones and other scientists argue that the genetic engineering of seeds ignores a basic fact of evolution: the action of a gene—or any protein—can depend on the species in which it is located. The most vivid example of that involved research by the seed company Pioneer Hi-Bred, where, in 1995, scientists placed genes from a Brazil nut into a soybean, to help increase levels of the amino acids methionine and cysteine, which made the beans more nutritious for animal feed. The plan worked, but there was an unforeseen demonstration of what can happen in the food chain when just a few molecules of DNA are altered: many people are allergic to Brazil nuts. If one of these people were to eat a cake made with soy that contained the Brazil-nut protein, the results could be deadly. In this case, science succeeded.


BILL GATES TAKES OVER THE
PSYCHIC FRIENDS HOT LINE
In the future, your TV and your computer will merge into ONE UNIT!
Oh, GOODY.
R. Chast



"Well, you've brought me down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and sky. Now will you take me back to Vegas?"

The Brazil-nut soybean was never eaten. Pioneer took blood from nine people in a laboratory, and stopped the experiments when the serum tested positive. Still, with such research occurring in countries that have weak regulatory systems, similar mistakes could have powerful consequences.

Shapiro understands the concern. "When you start talking about large-scale introduction of dramatic traits in combination with each other, you are dealing with systems that are so complicated that no one can effectively model them," he said. "You can start with running field trials, just as when you introduce a new drug you run clinical trials to see if people really keel over. But, just as the human body is a subtle and complicated thing, it may be that only one time in a million some side effect happens. And your testing won't reveal that. It has to be out there first. So what you have to keep asking yourself is: 'Suppose the worst happens, what are the consequences?' "

Many in the environmental movement have demanded that the "precautionary principle" be applied with special vigor to genetically modified foods, arguing that potential risks, no matter how remote, must be given more weight than any possible benefit, no matter how great. "It's the only safe way," Lord Melchett told me recently at the Greenpeace headquarters, in North London. "Because with all this stuff you are just dealing in speculation upon speculation. Hope upon whim. They talk about these great discoveries. But what do we really have?" The precautionary principle, when interpreted this way, would make it difficult to answer such a question, because it would prohibit investigation unless the outcome was known in advance.

But the most striking recent example of the precautionary principle involves the case of John E. Losey, an assistant professor of entomology at Cornell University, and his research on the monarch butterfly. Last year, the British science journal *Nature* published a short letter by Losey and two of his colleagues about the effects that Bt in a genetically modified type of corn had on the larvae of monarch butterflies. Bt is found commonly in soil, and it produces a toxin that can destroy the digestive tracts of worms and other pests but is harmless to mammals. Organic farmers use Bt spray liberally. Rachel Carson wrote supportively about it in "Silent Spring," and Lord Melchett told me that he has used it on his farm (he has also used Monsanto's Roundup). Bt spray, however, is chemically fragile and easily broken down by sunlight or washed away in the rain. So scientists decided to put it directly into plants; that way, plants create their own insecticides.

Losey examined how monarchs responded, in a laboratory, to Bt corn pollen, and in his study asserted that three-day-old monarch larvae that had been reared in a laboratory on milkweed leaves dusted with Bt pollen had a mortality rate of forty-four per cent. *Nature* rejected an article on Losey's study, but agreed to print a short "scientific correspondence" about his work. It was an instant sensation. The study was seized upon as "proof" that genetically modified organisms are deadly; one newspaper wrote, for example, about "butterflies bearing grenades." "It's the smoking gun," said Peter Roderick, who on behalf of the Friends of the Earth brought some of the first lawsuits in England against genetic modification. "What more needs to be said?" But a laboratory is not an open meadow, which is where monarchs like to lay their eggs, and several studies have shown that the pollen diminishes rapidly within three metres of the cornfield's edge, and that corn pollination is usually complete before monarchs begin feeding.

"How many monarchs get killed on the windshield of a car?" asked Anthony M. Shelton, who is a professor of entomology at Cornell, and a colleague of Losey's. Shelton has long urged that farmers build a "natural" refuge, a sort of moat containing traditional crops, or crops without Bt genes, around a genetically modified field. That would insure genetic diversity: insects that become resistant to the insecticide for modified crops would mate with neighbors living on traditional plants nearby, and their offspring would then be susceptible to the insecticides.

The monarch study has made for some touchy personal relationships—what one administrator described to me as "Bt football"—at Cornell. Losey, a shy but self-possessed man in his mid-thirties, has been put in an awkward position; bickering with tenured members of one's department has never been a fast track to success. But he isn't in retreat, either. "I think it is easy to sit back and say we would have known this," he

"I can't understand a word you're saying, Roger. Have you got a gun in your mouth?"

• •

told me. "But the study was not done before, and now we need to look at what it means. I take no side. I am supposed to look coldly and objectively at any pest-management tactic and assess its risks and benefits. When we did this paper, there was one other lab working on this issue. Now there are a dozen. That's the way it should be."

Because science and politics have become so entangled, it has been hard to pick rationally through the facts. The monarch-butterfly letter—or "killer corn" study, as it was often called—was released in the middle of the lengthy storm over the Terminator gene. The two were often lumped together. With the Terminator, Monsanto finally decided it couldn't win. In June, a few months before the Greenpeace conference, Gordon Conway, who is an agricultural ecologist and the head of the Rockefeller Foundation, publicly urged Monsanto to abandon the gene. Conway is a committed advocate of agricultural biotechnology, but he had decided that the gene carried with it too much dangerous social baggage. So even though Monsanto did not yet own the company that holds the patent (and never would: at the end of 1999, Monsanto withdrew its proposal to purchase the Delta & Pine Land Company, after an antitrust inquiry by the Justice Department), and even though the technology does not yet exist, and nobody can say for sure whether it would even work, or when, Shapiro announced that Monsanto would not pursue, develop, or ever use the Terminator. It was among the first times in the history of science that such a prominent discovery was disavowed years before it was even clear what its value might be.

Late last fall, I asked Lord Melchett if he thought that Monsanto had hit bottom. "No, it hasn't, actually," he said, confidently. "Not by a long shot."

As the Dow rose in the last two years, Monsanto's stock fell from a high of sixty-three dollars to thirty-five dollars at the end of December. (Last week, it had recovered, to fifty.) Just before Christmas, Monsanto even became something of an international joke, when the company's caterer in London announced with great fanfare that, for the safety of the employees, it had banned genetically modified food from the cafeteria at Monsanto's U.K. headquarters.

Shapiro's vision of a unified "life sciences" company that relied on biotechnology to create foods and drugs began to fade. Consolidation has become routine in both the agriculture and the pharmaceutical industries, and after more than a year of speculation that the company would break into pieces—and after many merger discussions with competitors—Monsanto announced, on December 19th, that it would join with Pharmacia & Upjohn. By the end of 1999, the company was worth less than twenty-five billion dollars—not much more than what most analysts say its pharmaceutical division, Searle, which Monsanto bought in 1985, would be worth by itself. (In 1998, Monsanto almost completed a merger with American Home Products, a deal that would have valued it at more than thirty-four billion dollars.) At the same time, Monsanto's Celebrex, a painkiller for arthritis that may also play a role in cancer prevention, had just become the most profitable new drug in American history, earning more than a billion dollars in its first year on the market, and Monsanto herbicides were selling better than ever.

One of the many organizations that oppose Monsanto (the Internet is filled with web sites like "MonsantoSucks" and references to "MonSatan") quickly described the merger with Pharmacia as Pharmageddon for Monsanto. "The reason there is controversy about this has nothing to do with biotechnology," Shapiro told me last fall. "This is about power. It's about them saying that if you want to make changes in people's lives or introduce new technology, you . . . are going to have to go through us. And if we don't approve, we are going to bring you down."

If you drive out of Naples for more than ten miles, on any road and in any direction, you will roll past fields of fennel, apricots, lettuce, onions, artichokes, cabbage, olive trees, and tomatoes. Especially tomatoes. This region is home to several of the world's most prized varieties, and among them one stands out: the plum-shaped San Marzano. According to Neapolitan tradition, pizza was invented as a vehicle for the consumption of the San Marzano. Ash from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius created a soil rich in potassium and other minerals which is not found anywhere else on earth. Like wine from Bordeaux or the tobacco in Cuban cigars, tomatoes grown there have a special taste.

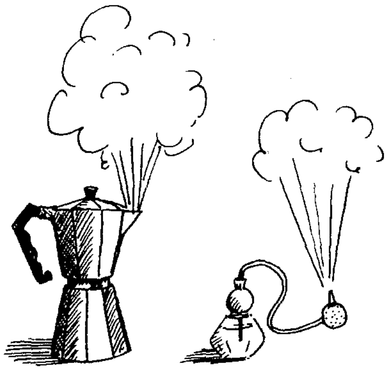
Eduardo Angelo Ruggiero's family has grown tomatoes outside Naples since 1919. Ruggiero is a sweet-tempered forty-two-year-old man with short, dark hair and wire-rimmed glasses. He has three children who plan to grow tomatoes, too. They will have to do it somewhere else, though, because Ruggiero's farm no longer operates here. "The last ten years have been disastrous," he told me one day when I went to tour the barren fields with him. "In the eighties, this was the No. 1 tomato-producing region in Italy. Now it is No. 4 or 5."

That's because a mosaic virus—a simple, common, but devastating disease—has taken over the fields. The infected plants become tall, stringy, and thin, making it hard for them to soak up water and impossible to protect the fruit from sun. "The tomato was born here," Ruggiero told me. "Now I think it's dying here. We understand that genetics could help, but the question is political. I myself have mixed feelings. I am afraid that if we grow tomatoes differently they will taste like every other tomato in the world. But there is also a truth. We have lost ninety per cent of our production in the past decade."

Ruggiero and others in the region sought from the government funding for genetically altered seeds, and researchers say it should be easy to create a plant that could withstand the virus. In Italy, however, as in most of Europe, there are regulations against such intervention. "TV every day is telling us the products are dangerous," he said, "and are being dumped on Europe against our will."

Not every country has had this experience. In Kenya, the national Agricultural Research Institute, with considerable help from Monsanto, has created a sweet potato that is protected against similar viral attacks. Sweet potatoes are an important food in Africa: they contain more calories and a greater array of micronutrients than any other crop. By inserting in the sweet potato viral proteins from the outer coat of the sweet-potato feathery-mottle virus, the researchers appear to have conferred immunity from a number of other common viruses as well. In Mexico, a similar approach has been used. In this case, Monsanto donated the genes to the Mexicans, but only after they agreed to insert them solely in varieties of potato used in Mexico.

In Italy, however, seed companies must present a certificate to farmers' cooperatives stating that their products have not been genetically modified. At harvest time, farmers are required to do that, too. Then food processors, distributors, and, eventually, supermarket chains all have to provide signed affidavits showing that their products are, as the Italians say, "biological," because, Ruggiero told me, people there refuse to tinker with nature.



But tinkering with nature is what farmers do, and so in thinking about genetically modified crops one runs into a crucial question: Is a plant perfectly natural if its genes are formed in a combination that has been arrived at over generations of breeding but polluted and dangerous if those same genes—the identical little snippets of DNA—are shot into the plant walls with a tungsten-coated gene gun? "This just drives me insane," Susan McCouch, a rice specialist who also teaches at Cornell, told me. "If you look even briefly at the history of plant breeding, then you know that every crop we eat today is genetically modified. Every one. Human beings have imposed selection on them all. So don't ask me what is natural and what is not. Because I have no idea."

If genetically modified crops are to fulfill their promise, they will have to do it in the Third World. Developments that Europeans dismiss as a joke matter deeply there. (The delayed-ripening tomato, initially marketed by Calgene, a company now owned by Monsanto, is a perfect example. To take genes that control ripening in fruit and slow them down may mean little in countries where produce is plentiful, refrigeration is cheap, and the roads are always open, but in Africa and Asia up to forty per cent of all vegetables rot in the field or are lost to pests.) Still, none of these advances are likely without large increases of public funding for farmers. "There is not enough incentive," Gordon Conway, of the Rockefeller Foundation, told me. He has been singularly effective in arguing that biotechnology must play a critical role in raising the level of prosperity in the developing world. "You have these two giants locked in a horrible battle," he said. "The fight may hurt Monsanto, and it may hurt Greenpeace. But the real casualties are going to be truth and the poor."

The need for new solutions to feeding the world is almost the only issue on which both sides seem to agree. New methods of farming, particularly the use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides, helped to more than double world food production over the past forty years. The number of hungry people fell drastically, despite a huge population increase. But this success came at the cost of tremendous erosion and loss of arable land. In addition, rapid urbanization has put new pressures on water resources; since the eighties, there has been a decline in the growth of crops-per-acre in most of Asia and Africa. Yet, according to a projection released last October by the International Food Policy Research Institute, the world demand for rice, wheat, and maize will increase forty per cent by the year 2020.

If the politics of genetically modified food has never been so anguished, the scientific prospects have never seemed more promising. Charles Arntzen and colleagues at Cornell's Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, for example, are tantalizingly close to developing a vaccine for hepatitis B and one for diarrhea that could be incorporated into the cells of a banana. The benefits would be enormous, particularly in places where refrigerators, sterile needles, and hygiene are always in short supply. Bananas can be grown in the countries that need them. They are cheap, simple to distribute, and babies can eat them as easily as adults. Arntzen told me that it will soon be possible to grow enough bananas on a single four-acre plot to protect a mid-size African country—his example was Uganda—from hepatitis B.

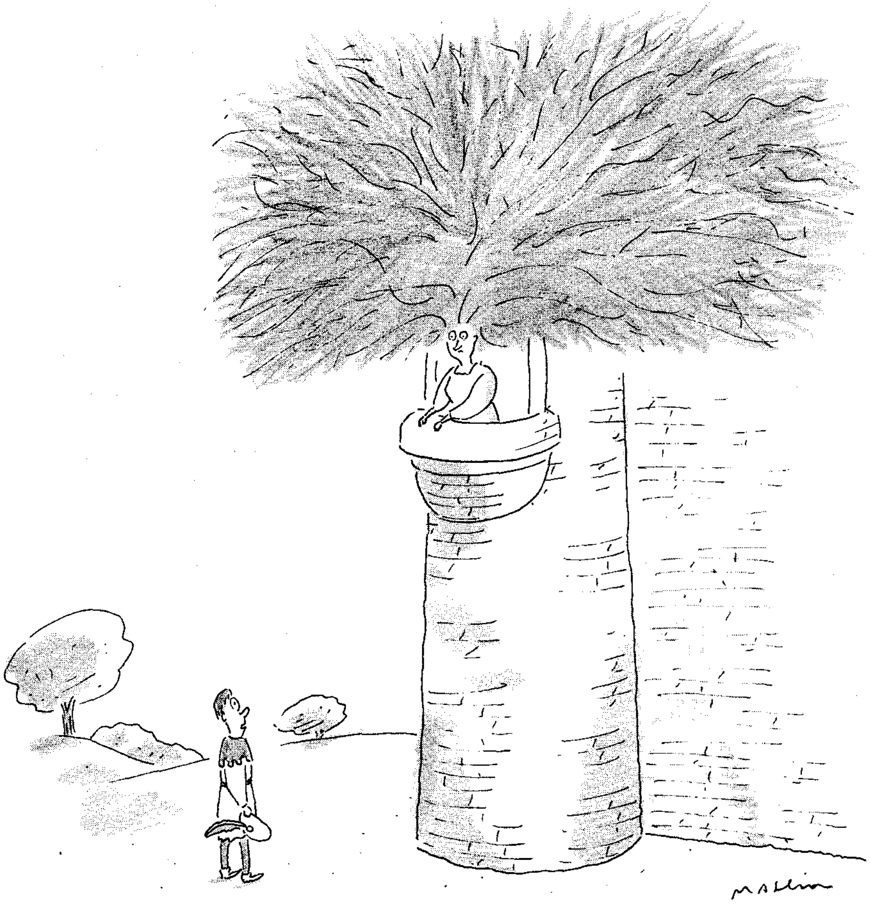
The most important recent development involves the world's most important crop: rice. At least a third of the world's population depends on rice, but it is a poor source of vitamins. According to UNICEF, more than a hundred million children suffer from Vitamin A deficiency; millions lose their eyesight as a result, and at least two million die each year from related infections. But in January a team led by Ingo Potrykus, of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, in Zurich, and Peter Beyer, of the University of Freiburg, in Germany, published a report showing how they had introduced into the rice plant three genes that complete the genetic pathway needed to produce beta-carotene—which is then broken down into Vitamin A. The result has been called Golden Rice, because of its color (beta-carotene turns the rice yellow), and also because of what it can accomplish. "When you can eat Vitamin A in your rice," Arntzen told me, "this one accomplishment of genetic engineering could alleviate more suffering and illness than any single medicine has done in the history of the world."

"I hate what we've become."

The gap between scientists and humanists has narrowed in the last fifty years, but it would be foolish to pretend that it has disappeared entirely. When I told Lord Melchett that I wanted, really, to write about the science of genetic modification, he was appalled. "If you write something, it shouldn't be about the science," he told me. "You'd be missing the point. People do things for all sorts of reasons that are rational, but they are not scientific or technical. Why does somebody buy a Rolls-Royce or a Mercedes? It's a box with four wheels. But nobody says you are completely irrational to buy an expensive car. If it's acceptable to choose your car based on emotion and not science, why should it be wrong to choose your food that way?"

I didn't ask him if he really thought it was acceptable to buy a Rolls. But I understood his fear. When frozen food was introduced, in the nineteen-twenties, people who were concerned about the effects of keeping food in a freezer for weeks or longer tried to ban it. Genetically modified products are new enough so that similar fears are easy to understand. The comparison that Greenpeace and many other opponents like to make is to nuclear power—a technology that seems to be in eclipse, despite having fundamentally changed the world. When it comes to promise, and potential peril, the pharmaceutical industry itself provides a better analogy: the development of antibiotics and vaccines has helped double life expectancy in most countries in the last century. Penicillin alone has saved millions of lives. But every technology has risks and benefits, and the same is true for food and drugs. People die from eating peanuts and shellfish every day. Allergies to penicillin still kill a few people every year in the United States, and aspirin causes a wide range of serious illnesses, and even many deaths.

Politics, not science, is now guiding the discussion about genetically modified products, and that makes people like Gordon Conway impatient. When we discussed the zealous way the precautionary principle is currently being applied, for example, he said, "There could be no benefits for anybody, because it could never be proved in advance that there would be no risk. I can think of no better definition for the word 'Luddite.' "



"I don't know about hair care, Rapunzel, but I'm thinking a good cream rinse plus protein conditioner might just solve both our problems."

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On an overcast day at the end of March, Monsanto stockholders gathered in Skokie, Illinois, to vote on the merger with Pharmacia. Shapiro told me before the meeting that he didn't know what to expect: protests were possible and security was tight. Yet there wasn't one placard in sight, and only about a hundred and fifty people turned up for the meeting, which was held at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, a high-tech concert venue surrounded by a string of malls. Most of those present were retirees from Searle, which is just down the road.

Shapiro appeared on the stage in casual slacks, a blue cotton shirt, and no tie. The Monsanto motto, "Food, Health, Hope," was projected on a screen behind him. He whipped through the proceedings in nine minutes. He talked about "convertible perpetual preferred stock," and requirements to change the company name to the Pharmacia Corporation. The vote that ended the era of Monsanto as an independent company was approved, as one shareholder noted, "in less time than it's going to take me to find my car keys." Shapiro thanked everyone and pointed out that "this is a momentous day in the history of our company."

Afterward, I asked Shapiro if he felt at all wistful. He smiled bleakly. "You always feel that way when you change something special," he said. "It doesn't mean it's bad or wrong. It's just new."

The Monsanto name will now remain attached solely to the agricultural part of the business, which may eventually be sold, so that the new company can focus on pharmaceuticals. Shapiro will relinquish the title of chief executive in the new Pharmacia Corporation, staying on for the next eighteen months as non-executive chairman, a job in which he will work mostly to smooth the merger with the board. When that chore is finished, Shapiro's career at Monsanto will be over.

"You know, Bob Shapiro is probably the greatest visionary we have in American agriculture," Charles Arntzen told me. "But it's never easy being that far ahead of the pack. I've spent a lot of time in Texas in my life, and they have this expression there for a guy who is out on a limb; they say he's a ridge rider. And Bob Shapiro has been riding that ridge for a really long time. Sometimes those people get where they are going, but usually not. Usually, they get picked off."

After one of our final conversations, I realized that, for all I knew, Bob Shapiro, a native of the Upper West Side and a specialist in urban life, wouldn't know which end of a shovel to plant in the earth. I assumed that to him this great game with seeds and chemicals was just that—a fantastic abstraction, like Go. So I sent him a note, asking if, as the head of one of America's biggest seed companies, he had ever planted a garden. It was a late winter Sunday, but he replied at once.

"Oddly enough, as I signed on to get my E-mail today I was (and am) surrounded by catalogs from White Flower Farm, Wayside Gardens, Shepherd's Seeds and Johnny's Selected Seeds," he said. "As soon as I finish my E-mail, I'm going on the web to place my spring orders. My father was an avid gardener, and so am I. We have a place in Michigan where I grow mostly flowering perennials, but also vegetables, fruit and berries. I love growing stuff, I love making compost—it all seems miraculous to me. It's also a rich source of metaphors for everything important in life." ♦

THE SPORTING SCENE

THEY'RE IN THE RIVER

What's the problem here—the fish or the fisherman?

BY JOHN McPHEE

I hadn't been a shad fisherman all my days, only seven years, on the May evening when this story begins—in a johnboat, flat and square, anchored in heavy current by the bridge in Lambertville, on the wall of the eddy below the fourth pier. I say Lambertville (New Jersey) because that's where we launch, but the Delaware River is more than a thousand feet wide there, and, counting westward, the fourth of the five stone bridge piers is close to New Hope, Pennsylvania. Yet it rises from the channel where the river is deepest.

American shad are schooling ocean fish, and when they come in to make their run up the river they follow the deep channels. In the estuary toward the end of winter, they mill around in tremendous numbers, waiting for the temperature in the cold river current to rise. When it warms to fifty Fahrenheit, they begin their migration, in pulses, pods—males (for the most part) first. Soon, a single sentence moves northward with them—in E-mails, on telephones, down hallways, up streets—sending amps and volts through the likes of me. The phone rings, and someone says, "They're in the river."

No two shad fishermen agree on much of anything, but I would say that if a female takes your lure you know it from the first moments, or think you do, and you're not often wrong. If you have a male on, you may be at first uncertain, but then he displays his character and you know it's a buck shad. The roe shad is often twice the size of the buck shad. She may weigh five to six pounds, while he weighs two or three. Shad don't exactly strike. First there's a fixed moment—a second or two in which you feel what appears to be a snag (and might be); then the bottom of the river seems to move, as if you are tied to a working trampoline; and you start thinking five, six pounds, big fillets in the broiler, the grained savor of lemoned roe; but now this little buck shad—two and a half pounds—takes off across the river, flies into the air, and struts around on his tail. He leaps again. He leaps once more and does a complete somersault. He can't be said to be cocky, of course, but he suggests cockiness and pretension. He's all show and no roe. She doesn't move. Her size and weight are not at first especially employed. Yet here is the message she sends up the line: If this isn't bedrock you'd be better off if it were; if you're in a hurry, get out your scissors. She stays low, and holds; and soon you are sure about the weight and the sex. Now, straight across the river and away, deep, she strips line, your reel drag clicking. She turns and moves back, an arcuate run. You're supposed to keep things taut but often she'll do it for you. When, rising, she rolls near the surface, she looks even larger than she is. She, too, can leap, can do a front flip, but she obviously knows that her shrewdest position is broadside to full current. It's as difficult to move her as it would be to reel in a boat sideways.

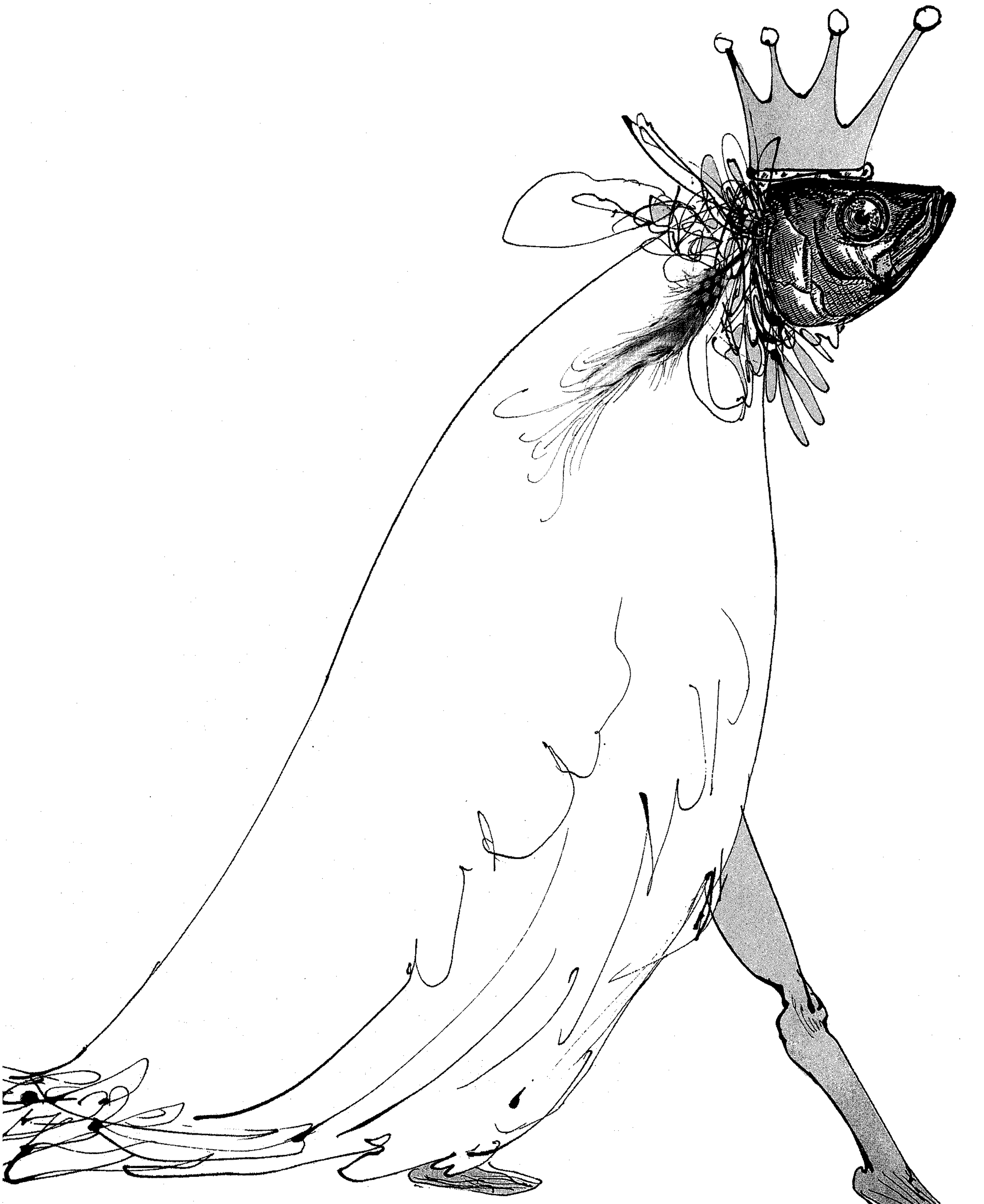
Like salmon, shad return to their natal rivers and eat nothing on the spawning run. Like salmon swimming two thousand miles up the Yukon River, migrating shad exist on their own fat. So why do shad and salmon respond to lures? Up and down the river, almost everybody has an answer to that fundamental question, but no one—bartender or biologist—really knows. A plurality will tell you that the fish are expressing irritation. Flutter something colorful in their faces and shad will either ignore it completely or snap at it like pit bulls. More precisely, they'll swing their heads, as swordfish do, to bat an irritant aside. They don't swallow, since they're not eating. Essentially never does a hook reach the gills, or even much inside the mouth. You hook them in the mouth's outer rim—in the premaxillary and maxillary bones and sometimes in the ethmoid region at the tip of the snout, all of which are segments of the large open scoop that plows through plankton at sea.

Below the Lambertville-New Hope bridge that evening, I was using a shad dart of my own making. A small metallic cone, it trailed bucktail tied on in a vise. Its body was chartreuse. Its base was dark green. It was coated with clear gloss. Extending with the bucktail from the tip of the cone, its No. 2 hook was black and chemically sharpened. Because the hook shaft includes a right angle and the eye emerges from the side of the cone, a shad dart is hydrodynamically hapless. It flips and flops and buzzes around like a fly that needs killing. If it snags, you're likely to lose it. Snags happen often. Held in the water column by the driving current, my dart was out about seventy feet.

Three of us were in the boat, close and tandem. I was in the middle, fishing over the shoulder of the skipper, Ed Cervone. Fishing over my shoulder was Ed's son, Edmund Cervone. Each of them had caught several shad, varying in sex, notable in size. I had caught two roe shad. The sun was setting. It was seven-thirty. Quitting time was upon us, but the rod in my hand was suddenly pulled by a great deal more than the current. The Cervones reeled in their darts and stowed their rods. They would wait and watch, as people do when someone else in a boat has a fish on the line.

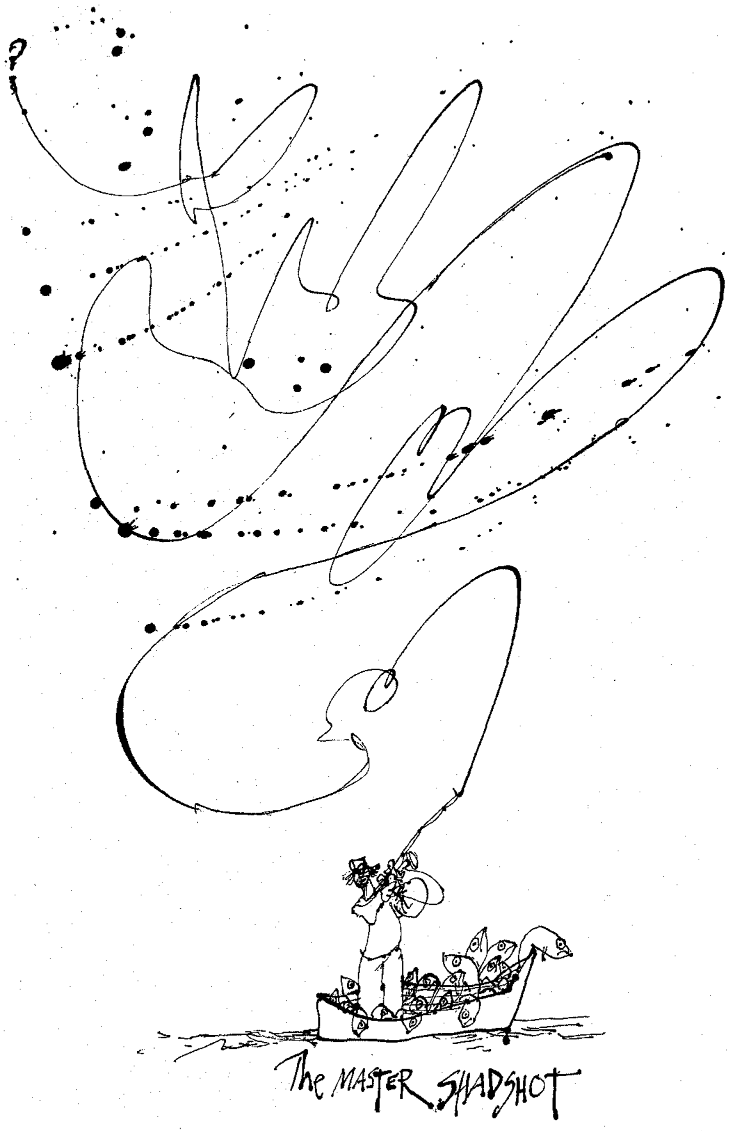
It felt heavy. It maintained for some time a severe tug without much lateral movement. "Female," I said. "Six pounds." Cervone the Elder, who has a doctorate in psychology, seemed unimpressed—seemed to be suggesting, through a light shrug, that he knew bullshit by its cover.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RALPH STEADMAN



KING SHAD of the DELAWARE

He knew he wasn't fishing with Buddy Grucela. He knew he wasn't fishing with Erwin Dietz or Gerald Hartzel—living figures in the Cooperstown of shad. He knew that in my seven years as a shad fisherman I had risen steadily into a zone of terminal mediocrity. And he was well equipped to empathize. Ours was one of twelve boats below and around the western bridge piers. Nearly all the others had been doing well, too. When that fish of mine came on the line toward the end of the day, a guy in the boat next to us looked over and said, "It doesn't get any better than this, does it?" At that moment, thirty feet of line came off the reel against the drag. I thought the line would snap.



Dietz and Hartzel are waders, bank fishermen, and you'd usually encounter them far upriver—at least three hundred miles above the sea buoy—where the Delaware is narrow, is punctuated with riffles and rapids, and has cut a deep gorge in the Pocono-Catskill plateau. The night air, cooler than the water, makes a thick early mist there. If you wanted to fish near a monumental figure like Dietz, and possibly be there ahead of him, you had to be on the river before dawn. As the light came up, it revealed a dark silhouette in the drifting vapors, standing on a rock catching fish. He always knew how many. "How many is that?" "Eleven." I could fish near him until the sun was high, doing everything he did, and catch nothing, or one or two. Nearing retirement, he was a mason then, in New York City construction. He lived in Queens. Somewhere in my fishing diaries I wrote: "He recovers his dart and casts anew faster than anyone I've ever seen. He brings fish in rapidly, and swiftly releases them. Then his dart is in the air. He is very sensitive on the jig, his rod tip low, his twitch minimal. While I am fishless, Dietz's rod is electric with excitement. Two. Three. Four. He works fish. I watch. And watch. He loses a dart to a snag. Cool. He is idle. Out of it. I am casting—two, three, four. The numbers refer to casts but not to shad. At last he finishes tying on a new dart, and he flings it into the river. It swings through the current, and his rod is bent by another fish. How . . . Does . . . He . . . Do . . . It? After he casts, he holds his rod at a forty-five-degree angle. His wrist flicks almost imperceptibly at a consistent rate of about once a second. He says he can feel the shad bump the dart in the center of the current, bump it again, and then go for it. His line and his lures are identical with mine. I imitate him as precisely as I can. He hooks fish, I hook water."

As Gerald Hartzel stepped into the upper river at five-thirty of a June morning—after driving more than three hours—his shad net would be holstered on his back so that its hoop rose above his head like a circular antenna. He reached for it often. He used a five-and-a-half-foot rod with four-pound line and an ultra-light reel. He had a long wooden staff that floated on a tether beside him. He was slim. Six feet. Polaroid glasses. On his brown hat were two fishing licenses. Sewn on both his hat and his vest was the orange-and-green emblem of the Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association. He cast with a short direct punch from eye level, as if he were throwing a dart not so much at a fish as at a tavern wall. As one such morning began, he caught a shad, and then another, but not rapidly, and he seemed puzzled. Then, arms up, he began to hold the rod high before him, as if he were reaching for a shelf; and, in quick succession, he flipped up the tip, up again, up once more—fish on the line. Rooted in fast water, apparently tireless, he caught shad after shad after shad, always with his arms extended high. His darts were very small. Across the morning, they were in the water an amazing percentage of the total time. He was efficient in the rhythm of his casts. Page 1, line 1: If your dart is not in the water you are not catching fish. Jigging—twitching—the line, he gave complete attention to each moment of every swing, his eyes swinging, too, like a long-ball hitter's. After fishing downstream from him, I quit when he did. In four and a half hours, I had caught six shad, including one roe that I kept. In the four and a half hours, he had landed twenty-one shad. Wearily rubbing a shoulder, he said, "Did you see what I had to do?"

Hartzel had been shad fishing more than thirty years. He spoke of fifty-shad days. Since page 1, line 2 of this enterprise is "Position counts"—that is, a person in the right place can bring fish in steadily while a neighboring line is scoreless—I said as he was leaving that I thought I would fish awhile just where he had fished. "Good idea," he said. "Be careful. This is a treacherous river. Start in that little eddy behind the rock there, and then move out a little." With my arms above my head, twitching, I started in the eddy behind the rock there, and soon edged out closer to the channel. I fished for two hours just where he had fished. I caught nothing. I felt no hits. My fishing diary from that day says, "When I played basketball, I was very much less effective when I went to the right. When I dribbled, I sometimes had to glance at the ball. I had no reverse pivot. I didn't roll. I sucked. And if I didn't know it before, I know now that there are Larry Birds in the river. Joe DiMaggios. Ben Hogans. Reds Grange." The annual run was about over, and as I was leaving the river another fisherman asked me how I'd done for the year. "About fifty," I said. He said, "That's quite a season." By that standard, Gerald Hartzel has a new season every time he leaves home. The diary continues: "There is more to the association of Delaware River shad fishermen than a bunch of people whose success uniformly depends on the presence and mood of the fish. If it's the last thing I do on this earth, I'm going to have a fifty-shad day. It's that or live forever."

The great Buddy Grucela, whose domain of the American shad runs from Easton to Portland, Pennsylvania, was a bank fisherman when he was young and often had fifty-shad days. He is the author of "The Original Guide to Better Shad Fishing on the Delaware River" (Grucela, Easton, 1980), of which I have six copies, one of them covered with shad blood and puffy from river and rain. It's on a shelf between C. Boyd Pfeiffer's "Shad Fishing" (Crown, New York, 1975) and Henry B. Bigelow and William C. Schroeder's "Fishes of the Gulf of Maine" (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1953). When Grucela was thirty-five, he was more or less forced to get a boat, because shad fishermen had become so numerous that he needed to get out onto the water to find a position that counted. In a manner of speaking, he had to accept a cut in pay ("I caught more shad from shore than ever from the boat"), and, while he wasn't exactly hemmed in by other floating fishermen, they were pretty close. His favorite anchorage was two hundred yards upriver from the tributary Martins Creek. A lot of people followed him there. One morning, he had a buck shad on his line running upstream, running downstream, leaping, tailwalking. It jumped into another guy's boat.

Grucela: "I knew the guy. He'd been catching nothing for three days. He wouldn't give me the shad. He said he needed it to prove to his wife he was shad fishing. Some guys can fish in a hatchery and catch nothing. He was one of those guys."

Buddy Grucela did not require another experience like that one to cause him to arrive at the river routinely before dawn. "The shad aren't stirred up yet," he explains. "The more they're stirred up, the spookier they get. At daybreak, it's just you and the geese, man."

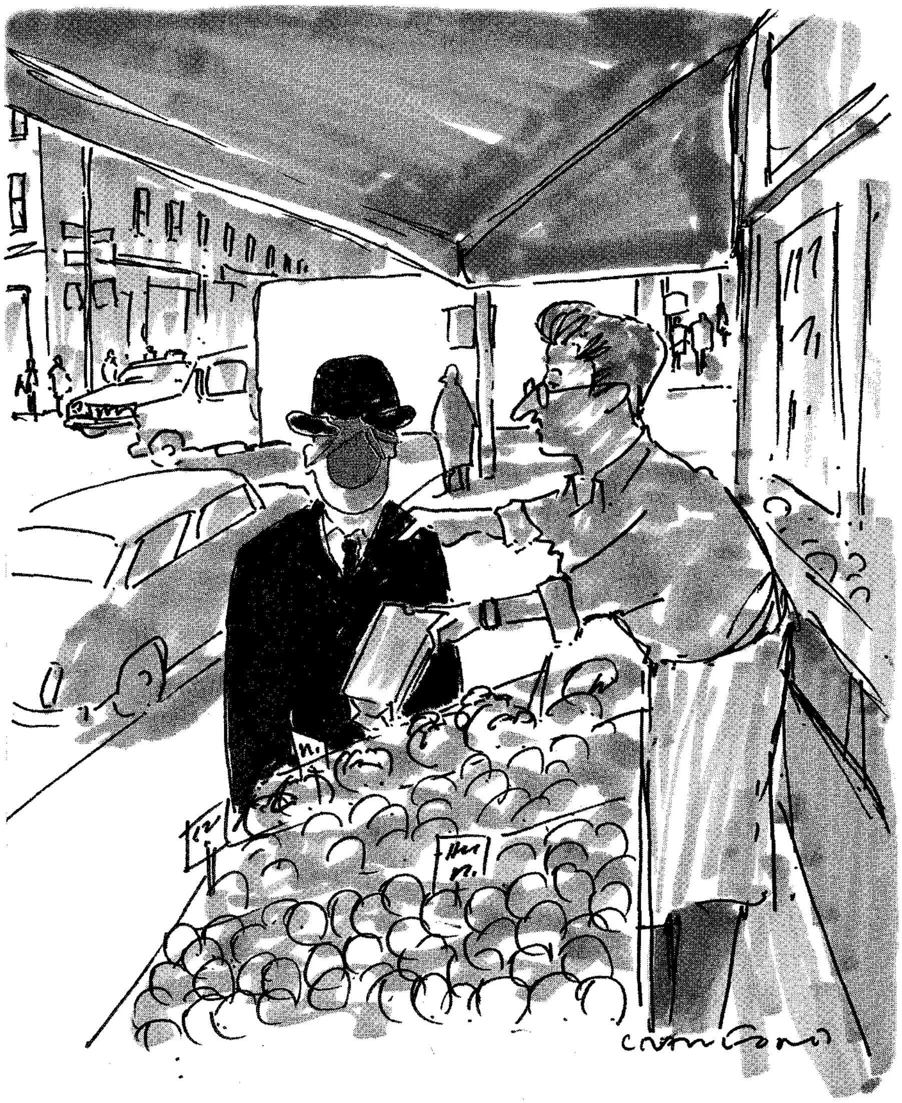
If, say, three hundred thousand shad come up the Delaware River, three hundred thousand shad come to Buddy Grucela. Or something near it. Shad are long-term spawners, doing it nightly for many nights, and they seem to prefer to be well above Trenton. Easton to Portland is twenty miles of river. A claim could be made that those twenty miles relate to the American shad as the Doaktown pools of the Miramichi relate to the Atlantic salmon. To the Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association—a conservation group that tries to keep the river healthy—Easton to Portland is, by and large, where the dues payers are in April. Halfway up the reach is Foul Rift, a quarter mile of haystacks and standing waves, the preëminent rapid among the several hundred in the Delaware. A few miles south—close to Martins Creek, Pennsylvania—is a ledge of white water that slants downstream from right bank to left, its base the base of Buddy Grucela.

He grew up in Martins Creek, to which his grandfather (originally named Grutzela) had emigrated from Poland to work in the cement plant. Buddy's father worked in the cement plant, and so, eventually, did Buddy. When he was a kid, he saw big silver fish in the river in spring and had no idea what they were. In his twenties, he was catching so many shad he carried them home on a tree limb. After the cement plant closed, in the nineteen-sixties, he worked in a mill that was generous with vacations. He took them when the shad appeared, and, as long as the run lasted, spent all day every day on the water. Later, working as a traffic director on a Delaware River bridge, he was rebuked for fishing on the job.

No piece of tackle is more effective for a fisherman than his own daily data: weather, water temperature, water volume, lure, line weight, line density, and many an etcetera. Just the act of recording such things imprints them in cumulative memory, and you move forward learning where to be and what to do when. Grucela's sense of the run and the river is so refined in this respect that he envisions in his season a single apex day. Not that he wouldn't go out on the Ides of March or give it a try on the Fourth of July. At the latitude of Martins Creek, though, if his season were somehow restricted to just one day the day would be the twenty-fourth of April. Year upon year, it has been his best day. In the off season, just thinking of April 24th will cause him to smile like a winning coach, and say, "When you're fishing, nothing beats catching fish."

On the twenty-fourth of April, above Easton, the roes are in the river—April 24th and a week or two on either side. "The roe run comes in two parts—the early roe run and the late roe run. Then you get a late buck run—real small and too young, precocious bucks." Shad are not always swimming near the bottom of the water column, as some shad fishermen inflexibly believe. Grucela starts low, then removes weight incrementally until he finds the level of the fish. All that notwithstanding, he will state summarily, "The secret of shad fishing is depth." And he adds, "That's why they kill them with downriggers." Grucela spurns downriggers—devices that pinch your line far below your hull and keep the dart at depth. He prefers to do the fishing himself. "I just throw my dart and let it rattle in the current."

He uses two rods, a dart on one line, a flutter spoon on the other—no droppers, no doubling up (two lures on one line). A flutter spoon has the slim shape



"*Sure I can't pop that in a bag for you, sir?*"

of the leaf of a white willow. He pays it out behind his boat and leaves it in the water, fluttering. The dart he casts repeatedly, retrieving it after its swing through the current. A machinist custom-made his dart mold. If Buddy Grucela were a golfer, he would not be attracted to an iridium driver. His gear is conventional, starting with six-pound line. He keeps a small split shot within twelve inches of the dart, so minor debris will collect on the shot and not on the hook. When the river is full of aments, also known as catkins (flower clusters of willow, birch, or alder), the split shot catches the catkins.

Record American shad have been caught in the Delaware River (eleven pounds, one ounce) and the Connecticut River (eleven pounds, four ounces). Buddy Grucela is certain that he had one heavier than that. After the dart stopped in mid-swing, and the moment of stasis was over, this fish, close to the surface, went straight up the river. Grucela watched it go, wondering what would happen next. This happened next: "He swam right by me like a shark. He was going upstream and he saw me. He looked me in the eye. Then he came right at the boat like a torpedo. He's coming right at me, and I'm reeling fast. He went under the boat, right under me. He bent the rod tip under the boat. He broke the rod off. All I had in my hand was the reel and the handle. That fish—I'm telling you—was a record shad." It was also, beyond doubt, a female. Shad fishermen can't seem to help virilizing gender when they tell stories about big, powerful animals.

Grucela owns a piece of undeveloped, parklike riverfront land, tight between the water and Pennsylvania 611. Under a red granite tombstone there is Redgie, his Doberman of fifteen years. Redgie died watching television with Buddy Grucela. Toward the end of shad season, a bright-red tulip blooms beside the headstone, on which are carved two fish, one bearing the date of Redgie's birth and the other the date of his death. Etched above the fish is a dog bone bearing Redgie's name. In the Redgie years, after Grucela hooked a shad, Redgie watched the action until the fish was beginning to lie on its side. Then Redgie went after it. He went into the river like a bird dog and retrieved Grucela's shad. One day, a carp pulled Redgie under.

Gradually, I got some of my line back that evening by the bridge pier in Lambertville, but only to watch it go out again. After twenty minutes, I had not moved the fish two feet upcurrent. It didn't come out of the water. It didn't even come up in the water. It acted like a shad. It went to the right. It went to the left. It lingered in reaches broadside to the current. The fish was so strong it just would not come toward me, and it felt very heavy. I was using one of my Daiwa SS 700 lightweight reels, with no backing. They don't carry much line. I was using six-pound test. Now thirty minutes had passed. The fish went downriver in another long run against the drag. Ed Cervone's pebbly chatter was turning quizzical, his mind an open pamphlet. He was thinking, What is the problem here—the fish or the fisherman? Edmund Cervone, behind me, said nothing. Edmund was an instinctive, natural, absolute river fisherman. On various outings, fish had come to his line while avoiding his father's and mine. You learned things from Edmund. You learned, for example, that small darts catch shad. The smaller the dart the more shad. Edmund was a college student, however, and could not afford much time on the river. His father and I, being teachers, were not similarly burdened. Many a day we had sat in the boat catching nothing but each other's words, and pondering the psyche of the planet's largest herring. We were sharing the river with half a million shad, whose interest in us was inverse to our interest in them.

Ed Cervone is the sort of person who, when he is fishing, might as well be chained among the shadows in a cave. No nuance of depth or color is too subtle to prevent his frequent adjustments of style. Chartreuse? Orange and black? Red and white? Gold? Low? Medium? High? He changes his dart, returns it to the water, and speaks: "In a field that is filled with ignorance, everyone is an expert." In the education of secondary-school students with dyslexia and many other learning disadvantages, Ed is a highly reputed practitioner of a variety of effective techniques, many of which he devised. He is a pioneer in his field. But not in this one. His doctorate may be in psychology, but these ocean fish are too much for him. Groping for reason, he essays, "What they do today they will not do tomorrow." For that one, I'd give him credit for a ton of insight. "You and I know as much as they do," he offers. "Or as little."

You can learn a lot about shad just from their appearance. Their bodies predict what they can do. Nowhere is this as emphatic as in the deeply forked tail—the caudal fin—which is tall, and, as seen from the side, narrow. It is not as tall, narrow, and deeply forked as a tuna's tail, but it's getting there. It has the high aspect ratio (length versus width) associated with extreme high speed. The dorsal fin, like a sail rising up from the shad's back, is centered—midway from nose to tail. Dorsal fins in various fishes can be forward, or aft, or anywhere along the back. The centered ones speak of an ability to swim steadily, sustaining high speed. The range of the American shad is from northern Florida to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and within the range a typical individual will swim two thousand miles in a year. They return to their home rivers after four or five years. One look at that forked tail and you know that the fish is active in the middle of the water column and not sitting around on the bottom like a bullhead catfish, whose tail is so rounded it looks like a coin. A trout has a rounded tail as well, and, as a swimmer, is one notch up from a catfish.

I am indebted for these descriptions primarily to Willy Bemis, an anatomist of fishes, who is a professor of ichthyology at the University of Massachusetts.

A shad in clear water, seen from above, is very dark greenish blue, with an almost metallic lustre. Its flashing sides are silver, its belly white. The body is deep, meaning that in outline it more closely resembles a zeppelin than a snake. The body is laterally compressed, meaning that in cross-section it is not fat. The largest shad I've ever caught weighed a little over six pounds and was two feet long, a not uncommon size. The scales are deciduous, diaphanous, and the size of dimes. In their treelike rings and other markings a practiced eye can discern the age of the fish and whether it has spawned before. Chemical analysis of a scale will reveal—among other things—what river the fish was born in. A deciduous scale is loose and comes off easily. A fish with the mobility and flank speed of a shad needs a loose-fitting scale in order not to be constrained. The fins, taken altogether, are like the stabilizing feathers of an arrow. The spines of the pectoral fins are right-angled levers. The pectoral fins are steering mechanisms, anti-roll devices, and brakes; and when they are not in use they are faired into the body, like retractable landing gear. A shad is supremely streamlined—a concept that came into hydrodynamics in the nineteenth century and was also known as "fish-body form." Under broad, shieldlike, adipose eyelids, the eyeballs are faired into the head. You can predict from a shad's large eyes the effects on its behavior of vision and light.

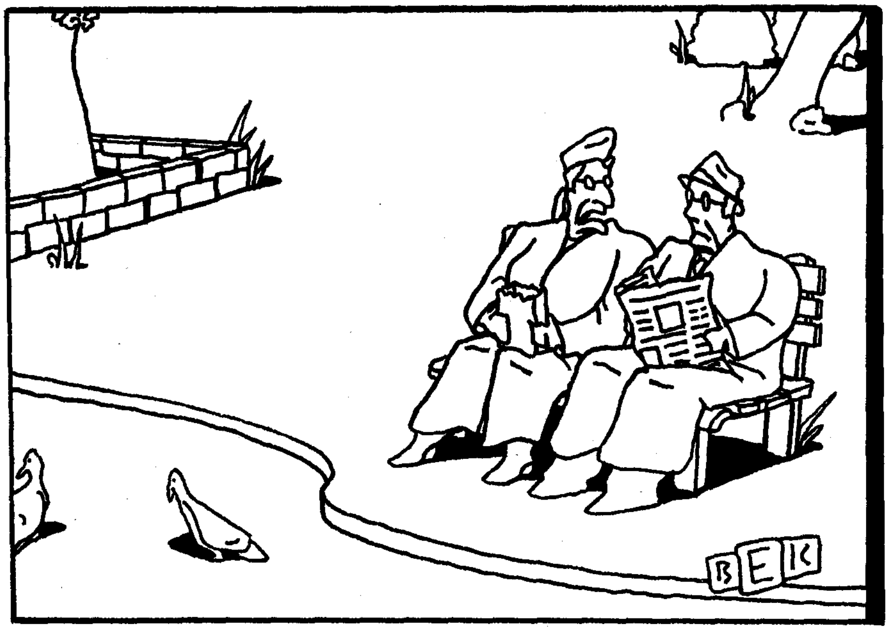
When the fish had been on my line forty minutes, dusk had begun to gather. Forty minutes was twice as long as any shad had been on my line anywhere before. The bridge above, with its open-grate steel roadway, was humming with tires—cars in rhythm like breaking surf. On the bridge walkway were prams, strollers, couples on their way to dinner. In the festival ambience of New Hope and Lambertville, babies never sleep. People stopped to lean over and watch. They shouted encouragement. They hung around to see the fish. No fish. Just a taut line, a rod tip high, an occasional plunge or lateral dash, a stripping run downriver. This was a scene from the nineteenth century below the old green bridge over the wide river between the two steepled towns, with narrow streets among riverine houses. Downriver past rapids was a stone tower—Bowman's Tower—rising from the top of a hill. And just above the bridge, off Lewis Island, Lambertville, a crew rowing a small boat was hauling a nine-hundred-foot seine in a great circle in the river, making—as the Lewis family has since

"I don't pout when we invite people you've slept with."

1888—a commercial catch of shad. I had essentially no time to look around, however. Past my rod and line, I was getting an increasingly concentrated, Warholian look at a small swatch of New Hope—sightseeing pontoon boats shutting down for the night, the many-windowed wall of the Club Zadar, the mansard roof and high-rising fly of the Bucks County Playhouse. Other shad boats were weighing anchor and departing. The boat next to us was about to leave, but its three occupants changed their minds and decided to stay and watch. More people collected on the bridge above. Because I'd been dealing with this fish for three-quarters of an hour, Ed Cervone—not for the first time—referred to me as "the Old Man" and to the river as "the Sea." He would be saying that again, and again, as the sky turned a deeper gray, and then black.

It's a bad idea to horse a shad. That is, if you become impatient or for any other reason try to shorten the story by muscling the fish into submission, you'll almost surely lose the fish. In the words of Buddy Grucela, "Shad have paper thin mouths and under no circumstances will they allow themselves to be railroaded." The maxillary and premaxillary bones, which constitute a large percentage of that big open mouth, run down its sides like a drooping dihedral mustache, and are very hard at the leading edge. A hook often wraps around that leading edge, penetrating the insubstantial membrane that lies behind. The hook is like a coat hanger swinging from a bar. The longer the shad is on the line, the greater the opening the hook will make in that thin membrane. Suddenly, the fish is gone. A fisherman doing everything right loses many shad. It's a basic component of shad fishing. Not all shad are hooked in just that way, but most seem to be, and when they are netted—or the tension on the line otherwise drops—there's usually no need to detach the shad dart; it just falls out of the mouth. The lower extremities of the premaxillary bones widen out like strips of durable plastic. If the hook lodges there, your chances of netting the fish are considerably larger. Of course, while the fish is in the water you've got no idea where the hook is and your only rational strategy is finesse.

More time went by. I'd had the fish on the line for an hour, and then an hour and a half. The guys in the boat next to us—now the only other boat—finally pulled anchor and left, mentioning something about their wives. There were people on the bridge who had been watching earlier, and had gone off to dinner, and now had come back from dinner and were watching again. One of them shouted, "Are you still catching that same fish?" I nodded without looking up. In the darkness, I was staring instead at the black vertical rod against the disco lights of Club Zadar, which had grown ever brighter with the fall of night and were flashing colors on the river. While the fish moved and sounded, and came up a little, and then sounded again, it almost hypnotized me as I concentrated on the swaying rod against the whirling colors. Gingerly, I worked it to the left and the right, trying to move its head to one side and then to the other side, to confuse it, and try to get in charge of it psychologically. But I'll tell you, I never got in charge of that fish psychologically. At nine-thirty, completing two hours on the other end of the line, it made the reel scream as it took off downriver like a tarpon.



"In my day, people died."

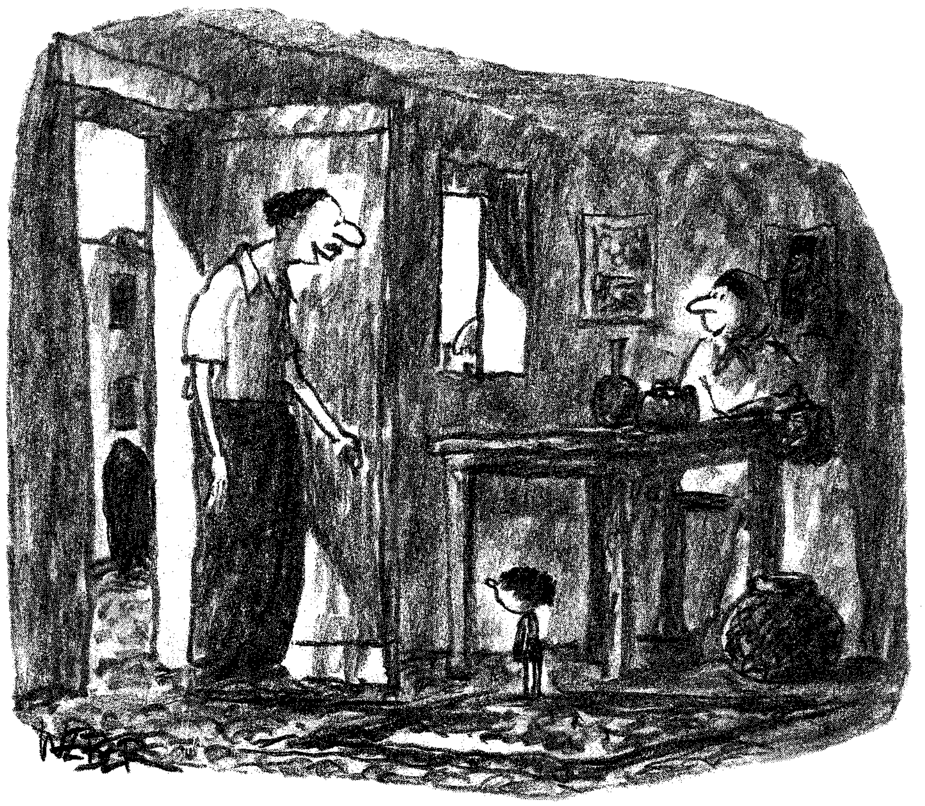
Tarpon? Well, hardly. But the Delaware is a river of prodigious fisheries, and for the past hour we had been doubting, speculating, wondering. What species could this fish be? It had been on the line more than five times as long any of us had ever required to bring in a shad. We now decided that it was not a shad. It felt like a shad in strong current, but the passage of so much time made us think elsewhere. The Delaware is the premier wild-rainbow-trout river in the eastern half of the United States. Ed Cervone and I had watched a shad fisherman catching a rainbow only ten miles north. The big native rainbows, though, were two hundred miles up the river. Besides, no rainbow could ever qualify to be this fish. Once, after I threw a shad dart into the current far upriver, the dart swung into a fish that felt like a shad with a bad cold. It moved around like a shad, but it just felt, by comparison, weak. It turned out to be a fat native wild rainbow, a beautiful fish, not much under two pounds.

There were numerous alternative possibilities. Edmund mentioned the muskellunge. If an alligator had the swimming skills of a barracuda, that would be a muskellunge. Muskies are lone ambush hunters, as much as six feet long, and are not uncommon in the Delaware. With two hours behind us, Ed Cervone dismissed the notion. "They give up," he said. "They roll over."

A walleye? Never. "A walleye would be fatigued in five minutes."

A striped bass? Never. "A striped bass would be fatigued in ten minutes.

Stripers fight very, very strongly—savagely. However, after a certain point they fade. They exhaust themselves. They use up their oxygen. Once you control the first few rushes it's awfully hard to revive them. They give up. They roll over."



"Good news—I got you into a terrorist camp."

A carp?

Edmund: "Whatever it is, if we catch it we're going to eat it."

Ed: "A carp wouldn't fight like that."

Me: "Oh, yes it would."

I remembered shad fishing one evening at the Trenton power plant when a guy had a carp on four-pound test. Carp can be three feet long, and his was not far off it. He struggled more than an hour. The power plant is on Duck Island, below the Trenton fall line, and the tide was coming in. The best shad fishing from Trenton downriver is said to be on the incoming tide. Duck Island is as far as you can drive along the river down Lamberton Road in Trenton. Then you put on your waders and walk at least half a mile around a high chain-link fence to an artificial bay at the edge of the river—a square bay, where the power plant discharges its cooling water. The water is warm, and fish collect there. More than two dozen fishermen were present that Monday evening, some in boats, some closely spaced along the shore, fishing in the effluent pond, the warm, man-made eddy. A kid caught a big roe shad while I watched. The same kid had a shad on his line every ten or fifteen minutes. I caught nothing. I was going too low—amateurishly using a quarter-ounce dart. It was sinking fast, and travelling under the shad, which were at the surface, where the warmth was. The kid was using a small green dart. I had nothing but the big darts. As dusk came, the shad were breaking water, hitting lures, working up a frenzy. But I could not hook one even while rods all around me were bending. The man with the carp at long last landed it. He used my net. The carp probably weighed twenty-five pounds. I was discouraged, walking back to the car. I was discouraged by my own failure and discouraged by the scene I had just left: a bay of right angles raked with lures and fed with hot water that brought in the fish.

Edmund: "Maybe it's a catfish."

Ed: "That is a distinct possibility."

While fishing for stripers, Ed had caught a "huge blue cat" in Trenton. The biggest catfish I'd ever seen—far larger than any I'd seen in the bayous of the Atchafalaya—came out of Lake Carnegie, in Princeton. Eventually, we agreed all around that the fish on my line was probably a big channel cat—a catfish with a head at least the size of a basketball. Two hours, fifteen minutes. By now, that's what it felt like.

When Edmund mentioned a sturgeon.

Ed: "Yes! Yes!"

Me: "A *sturgeon?*"

Ed: "A spawning fish that goes up the river and has tremendous energy."

Me: "I know what a sturgeon is."

Ed: "That's it. Completely possible. I saw one by the 202 bridge a few years ago."

Looking up the river in daylight from New Hope, you can see the 202 bridge.

For that matter, a man I once talked to had seen a six-foot sturgeon in New Hope. Eventually, we agreed all around that the fish on my line was a sturgeon.

When a shad is foul-hooked—caught in the tail, or another fin, or any part of the body other than the mouth—the shad loses its grip on reality, sprints away in total rage, and thrashes the river on erratic vectors. It is very difficult to hold on to a foul-hooked shad. This fish, of course, could be a foul-hooked shad.

Among the spectators on the bridge, a cop appeared. He shouted, "Does one of you guys down there own a green Jeep?"

Ed Cervone shouted back, "Yes, Officer, I do."

"Well," the cop continued, with the slightest pause. "Your wife called. She wants you home. She thinks you're dead."

Laughter on the bridge—9:50 P.M.

It was not true that Marian Cervone was concerned about her husband. By her own account, the man is too unpredictable to worry about. She wasn't worried about Edmund, either. It was my wife, Yolanda Whitman, whose mind had been crossed by the ultimate possibility. This was a few years before the sudden bloom of cellular phones. I don't have one now—let alone then. I had no way to tell her why

I was late, and deliberately breaking off that fish never crossed my mind.

Yolanda seems to remember the evening with total recall. For one thing, it was my turn to cook. "By nine o'clock, I was just plain mad," she has said for the record. "You were dithering too long. I was waiting for my dinner. You were taking your sweet time, failing in your responsibilities."

Yes.

"At some point after that, I shifted from mad to concern. You had fallen out of the boat. Gone through the rapids."

The rapids, not far from the bridge, cross a diabase ledge and are tumultuous in spring.

"It was pitch black. Cold. I imagined you with hypothermia in the river. So I called Marian. I told her I was worried because your absence was 'out of character.' "

Marian must have marvelled that someone could seriously use a phrase like that about a husband. Marian said she would call back if she learned anything. After hanging up, she called the Lambertville police. She said her husband and son and a friend were out in a boat and had not returned "way beyond the time" she expected them. Would the police check the boat-launch parking lot and see if a green Jeep was there? The woman on the other end of the line said the police surely would.

A while later, the police called Marian, and Marian called Yolanda, who continues the narrative: "While I waited, a tear or two actually squeezed out. I had let myself wander into the impossible. Perhaps I was madder at Ed than at you—who knows? After Marian called back, I was again spitting mad. She said, 'They're still fishing.' "

Two hours, thirty minutes. At last the fish had come up enough in the river so that the people on the bridge caught glimpses of it as, now and again, it canted—silver flashing—and changed direction. We heard them go "Ooh!" We heard them shout, "Wow, what a huge fish!" When we, in the boat, finally got a glimpse of it, we thought it enormous, too. Toward the end, I kept pressing it, tightened the drag even more, a risky, foolish thing to do. I just hoped it would not make a sudden run. If it did so, at least I had turned off the anti-reverse button, and the reel could spin free. Buddy Grucela, page 22.

The fish was close now. When it saw the boat, it dived. After it came up, and saw the boat again, it took off for the bottom of the river, slowly to rise once more. At some point in the last five minutes, Edmund tried for it with the boat net and missed. I finally worked it up to the side of the boat. It was still swimming, unspent. It did not roll over. It never gave up. On the second try, Edmund got it into the net, and the dart dropped out of its mouth. He brought into the boat a four-and-three-quarter-pound roe shad.

Now, after seven more years, I still have the dart—secured with monofilament to a small piece of cedar shingle. It was only the second dart I had ever retired. On a bookshelf, I propped it up beside a dart of the same weight and colors, with which, on an upriver day the spring before, I had caught seventeen shad without changing or losing the lure. The chemically shaped hook was a novelty I had succumbed to in a catalogue. That shipment of hooks was uneven, to say the least. Some of them were so weak they were bent out straight by the force of tugging shad. But not this one. Despite two hours and thirty-five minutes in the shad's mouth, the curve of the black steel looked as it had when I made the dart and festooned it with bucktail in a vise. At home, I studied the fish with a magnifying glass under a bright light. It had not been hooked on the top of the head or in any other place on the outside. It was not foul-hooked. It was hooked in the roof of the mouth, very near the front, slightly off the midline, to the right. I saw a narrow hole there, and I put a toothpick in it, which did not come through to the outside. The connection of hook and shad had been something like a trailer hitch.

Mindful of the species' paper jaw and its legendary fragility, I would one day lay a shad on a dissecting table at the University of Massachusetts and show Willy Bemis just where my fish had been hooked.

"How would you describe that, Willy?"

"It's the ethmoid cartilage of the braincase. It's the part of the braincase that everyone would understand as, regionally, the nose. One solid cartilaginous structure forms the braincase during early development. This is the anterior tip of it. The brain is back in the center of the head. Most of the braincase is protected by bone, which would make it a very tough place for a hook to latch on to. But once you've got a hook past the bone and into that little piece of cartilage, it doesn't come out. If a hook goes through that, it's going to hook on to the fish in a very serious way. There's no way that fish is ever going to throw that hook."

The monofilament line felt sandpapery. When I took it off the reel, it contracted instantly into coils from a hundred and fifty-five minutes of twisting. A thick mass of bunched contracted circles hopelessly intertwined, it looked like something an owl dropped.

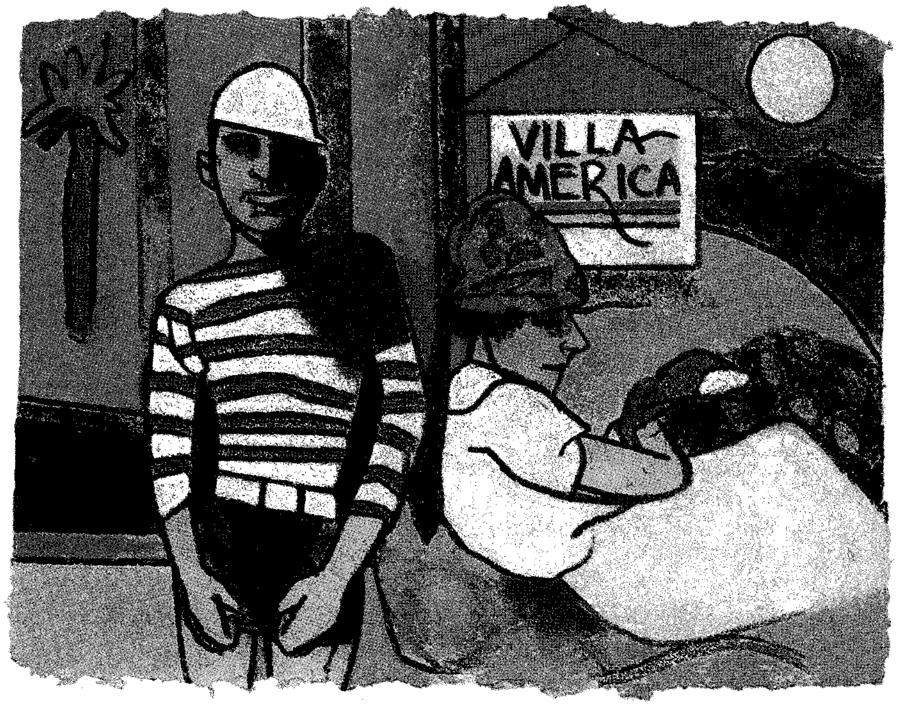
I sent the reel to the Daiwa Corporation, in Garden Grove, California, for an assessment. They wanted $54.40 to fix it, because the shad had bent the pinion gear, the shad had bent the drive gear, the shad had damaged the oscillating system and gone a long way toward wearing out the drag system. The reel required two new gears, a new pawl, a new worm shaft, and three new drag washers.

I still have some of the scales. They report the shad's age as three. For a female that young to be on the spawning run is more than uncommon. It's rare. The scales record strong growth in the river in the first summer, as the egg turned into a larva, and the larva into a juvenile. They record normal growth in the ocean in each of the following years. Then they show the shad coming back into the river—two years earlier than most females do.

Soon after that evening in Lambertville, I told this story to Richard St. Pierre, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Headquartered in Harrisburg, on the Susquehanna River, he is a shad specialist, who has worked as a shad consultant on the Hudson River, the Columbia River, and the Yangtze. He said that it must have been a letdown for me to learn that the fish was not a striped bass or a sturgeon or a muskellunge "but just a shad."

It was not in any sense a letdown, I told him. I'm a shad fisherman. I was fishing for American shad. ♦

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

Work on the Villa America was proceeding slowly, and when the Murphys went down to Antibes for the summer of 1924 they had to put up again at the Hôtel du Cap. Several of their friends visited them there—the Gilbert Seldeses (on their honeymoon), Etienne de Beaumont and his wife, and, later on, in August, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and their daughter Frances, or "Scottie." The Murphys had met the Fitzgeralds in Paris that spring, soon after their arrival in Europe. Scott and Zelda had announced that they were fleeing the hectic life of social Long Island, and in June they had settled in Saint-Raphaël, where they planned to live on "practically nothing a year." When they came over to visit the Murphys at the Hôtel du Cap, it was evident that the quiet life had so far eluded them. Severe marital strains, in fact, had put them both on edge. One night, after they had all gone to bed, the Murphys were awakened by Scott, who stood outside their door with a candle in his violently trembling hand. "Zelda's sick," he said, and added in a tense voice, as they hurried down the hall, "I don't think she did it on purpose." She had swallowed a large, but not fatal, quantity of sleeping pills, and they had to spend the rest of the night walking her up and down to keep her awake. For the Murphys, it was the first of many experiences with the Fitzgeralds' urge toward self-destruction. Later in their stay, when Sara remonstrated with them for their dangerous habit of coming back late from parties and then, on Zelda's initiative, diving into the sea from thirty-five-foot rocks, fully clothed in evening dress, Zelda turned her wide, penetrating eyes on her and said innocently, "But, Sara"—she pronounced it "Sayra"—"didn't you know? We don't believe in conservation."

Toward the end of the summer, work on the Villa America had progressed far enough for the Murphys to move in, and from that time until they left Europe for good, ten years later, it was their real home, although they also kept a small apartment on the Quai des Grands-Augustins, on the Left Bank. They went up to Paris at least once a month and stayed in close touch with everything that was going on in the capital—that winter, Gerald exhibited a six-by-six-foot "miniature on a giant scale" of the inside of a watch at the Salon des Indépendants—but the Cap d'Antibes was now their base. Murphy had converted a gardener's cottage into a studio, where he worked a good part of every day. Another small farmhouse, or *bastide*, on the property had been made over into a guest cottage. The children—then three, five, and six—were overjoyed by the new arrangements, and it seemed to most of the Murphys' friends that the life of this fortunate family had fallen into its true pattern.

—Calvin Tomkins
"Living Well Is the Best Revenge" (Profiles), July 28, 1962

FICTION

ENOUGH

BY ALICE McDERMOTT

Begin, then, with the ice-cream dishes, carried from the dining room into the narrow kitchen on a Sunday night, the rest of the family still sitting contented around the lace-covered table, her father’s cigarette smoke just beginning to drift into the air that was still rich from the smell of the roast, and the roasted potatoes, the turnips and carrots and green beans, the biscuits and the Sunday-only perfume of her mother and sisters. Carried just two dishes at a time because this was the good set, cabbage roses with gold trim. Two bowls at a time, silver spoons inside, carried carefully and carefully placed on the drainboard beside the soapy water where the dinner plates were already soaking, her mother being a great believer in soaking, whether children or dishes or clothes, or souls. Let it soak: the stained blouse, the bruised knee, the sin—sending them into their rooms with a whole rosary to pray, on their knees, and a full hour in which to do it.

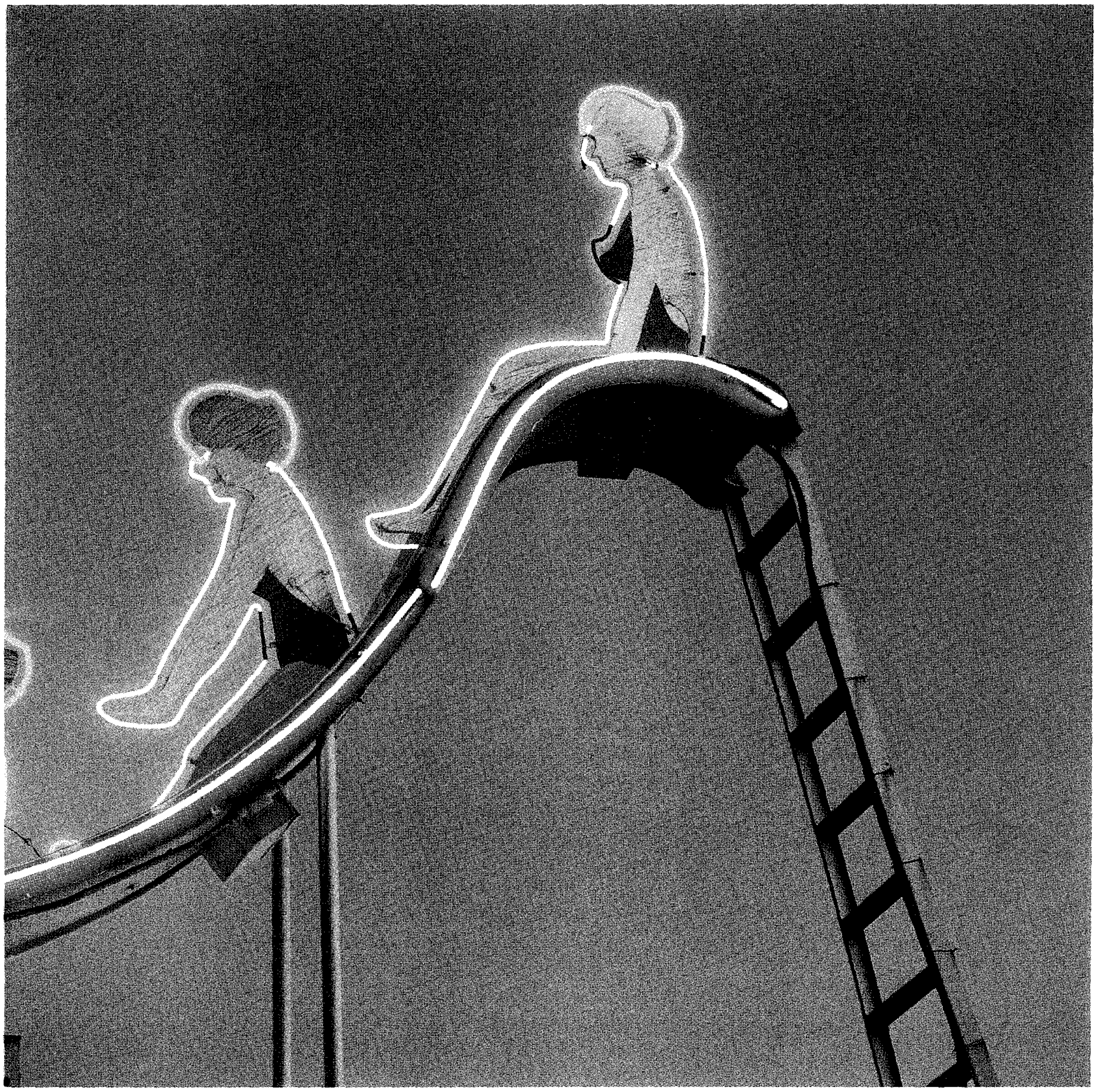
She was the youngest child, the third girl with three brothers, and since the boys were excused and the kitchen too small, their mother said, to hold a pair of sisters in it together, this final task, the clearing of the ice-cream dishes, was hers alone. Two at a time, she gathered the plates while the others sat, contented, limp, stupefied with food, while she herself felt her stomach straining against the now tight waist of her good dress, felt her legs grown heavy from all she had eaten. Sunday dinner was the only meal they had with their father, who worked two jobs to keep them all fed (that was the way it was put by mother and father both, without variance), and the bounty of the spread seemed to be their parents’ defiant proof of the man’s long week of labor. They always ate too much at Sunday dinner and they always had dessert. Pie on the first Sunday of the month, then cake, ice cream, stewed fruit—one Sunday after the other and always in that same rotation. Ice cream being the pinnacle for her, stewed fruit the depths from which she would have to rise, through pie (if mincemeat, hardly a step in the right direction, if blueberry, more encouraging), then cake—always yellow with eggs and dusted with powdered sugar—and then at last, again, ice cream, store-bought or homemade, it hardly made a difference to she who was told once a month that a lady takes a small spoonful, swallows it, and then takes another. She does *not* load the spoon up and then run the stuff in and out of her mouth, studying each time the shape her lips have made (“Look how cross-eyed she gets when she’s gazing at it”). A lady doesn’t want to show her tongue at the dinner table.

Carefully, she collected the bowls and carried them two by two into the narrow kitchen. She placed one on the drainboard and then lifted the spoon out of the other and, always, with a glance over her shoulder, licked the spoon, front and back, and then raised the delicate bowl to her chin and licked that, too, licked the cabbage roses and the pale spaces in between, long strokes of the tongue from gold-edged rim to gold-edged rim and then another tour around the middle. Place it down softly and pick up the next. The creamy dregs spotting her nose and her cheeks, vanilla or chocolate, peach or strawberry—strawberry the best because her brothers and a sister always left behind any big pieces of the fruit. Heel of her hand to the sticky tip of her nose (lick that, too) and then back into the dining room again for the next two bowls. Oh, it was good, as good as the whole heaping bowl that had been filled by her father at the head of the table, passed hand to hand by her sisters and brothers, and set before her.

Extrapolate, then, from the girlhood ritual (not to say, of course, that it ended with her girlhood) to what came to be known as her trouble with the couch. Trouble *on* the couch would have been more accurate, she understood later, when she had a sense of humor about these things that at the time had no humor in them at all. But such precision was the last thing her family would have sought, not in these matters. Her trouble with the couch, it was called. Mother walking into what should have been the empty apartment except that the boiler at the school had broken and the pastor had sent them all home and here she was with the boy from upstairs, side by side on the couch, her two cheeks flushed fever pink and her mouth a bleary, full-blown rose, and her mother would have her know (once the boy had slipped out the door) that she wasn’t born yesterday and Glory Be to God fourteen years old was a fine age to be starting this nonsense and wasn’t it a good thing that tomorrow was Saturday and the confessionals at church would be fully manned. She’d had a good soaking in recriminations all that evening and well into Saturday afternoon when she finished the rosary the priest himself had prescribed, the end coming only after she returned from the Communion rail on Sunday morning and her mother caught and held her eye. A stewed-fruit Sunday no doubt.

Her oldest sister found her next, on the couch with her high-school sweetheart, midafternoon once again—their mother, widowed now, off working in an office—and the first four buttons of her dress undone, the lace bodice of her pale-pink slip all exposed. And then not a month or two later that same sister found her there with another boy, his head in her lap and his hand brushing up and down from her ankle to her knees.

Then there was that Saturday night during the war when her oldest brother, too drunk to go home to his new wife on the next block, let himself in and found her stretched out on the couch in the embrace of some midshipman who, it was clear, despite their quick rearranging



JEFF BROUWS, "NEON SWIMMERS" (1995)/ROBERT MANN GALLERY

of clothes, had his fingers tangled up in her garter. There were buttons undone that time, too, and yet again when she was spied on by the second sister, who never did marry herself but who had an eyeful, let me tell you—a marine, this time, his mouth, to put it delicately, where her corsage should have been and her own hands twisted into his hair as if to hold him there—which led to such a harangue about her trouble with the couch that, finally, even her old mother was moved to say that there was a war on, after all.

Later, her best girlfriend joked that maybe she would want to bring that couch along with her on her wedding night. And joked again, nine months to the week later, when her first son was born, that she didn't seem to need that old couch after all.

There were seven children born altogether, the first followed and each of the others preceded by a miscarriage, so that there were thirteen pregnancies in all, every loss mourned so ferociously that both her husband and her mother advised, each time, not to try again, each birth celebrated with a christening party that packed the small house—made smaller by the oversized floral couch and high-backed chairs and elaborate lamps she had chosen—and spilled out into the narrow yard and breezeway, where there would be dancing, if the weather allowed. A phonograph placed behind the screen in the kitchen window and the records going all through the long afternoon, and on into the evening. You'd see her there after the last guest had gone, the baby on her shoulder and maybe another child on her hip, dancing to something slow and reluctant and melancholy ("One for my baby, and one more for the road"). Lipstick and face powder on the white christening gown that night, as well as the scent of the party itself, cigarette smoke and perfume and the cocktails on her breath.

She was a mother forever rubbing a licked finger to her children's cheeks,

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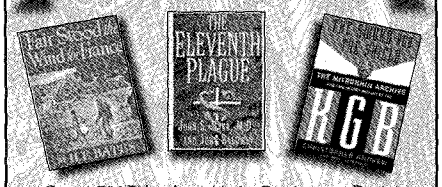

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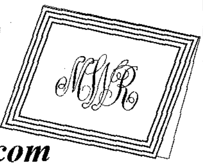

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scrubbing at the pink traces of her own kisses, forever swelling up again with the next birth. Kids in her lap and her arms wrapped around them even after their limbs had grown longer than her own. The boys, before she knew it, lifting her off her feet when she took them in her arms.

She was forty-six when she gave birth to the last, and he was eighteen and on a weekend home from college when he recognized, for the first time in his life, what the sighs and the stirrings coming from his parents' bedroom on that Saturday morning actually signified. (He did a quick calculation of their ages, just to be sure he had it right and then thought, Still?, amazed and a little daunted.) For the rest of the weekend, he imagined ways he might rib them about it, although he couldn't bring himself to come out with anything, knowing full well that even the most good-natured mention of what went on behind their bedroom door could get him the back of his father's hand—or, worse yet, cause a blush to rise from his own cheeks well before he'd managed to raise any kind of glow in theirs.

And there was the Christmas, some years later, when one of them had given their parents a nostalgic collection of forties music and, listening to Bing Crosby sing in his slow, sleepy way, "Kiss me once and kiss me twice (and kiss me once again)," hadn't their mother said, for all assembled to hear, "If you don't turn this off, I'm going to have to find a place to be alone with your father." And hadn't he and his siblings, every one of them well versed by then in matters of love and sex, sat dumbfounded, calculating, no doubt . . . seventy-one, seventy-two . . . still?

Shades of the trouble with the couch, she took her husband's hand in his last days and unbuttoned her blouse and didn't seem to care a bit who saw her, doctor or nurse, son or daughter or grandchild—or older sister who'd never married herself and couldn't help but say, out in the waiting room, "Now, really." She leaned forward, now and again, to whisper to him, even after he was well past hearing, her open lips brushing both the surgical tape that secured the respirator in his mouth and the stubbly gray beard of his cheek.

Growing plump in her widowhood, though she was the first to admit she'd never been what you would call thin, she travelled in busloads of retirees—mostly widows, although there was the occasional man or two—only missing a museum trip or a foliage tour or a luncheon (with a cocktail) at this or that historic site or country inn if a grandchild was in need of minding. What she could do best—her own daughters marvelled at it, who else would have the patience—was sit for hours and hours at a time with a colicky baby over her shoulder or a worn-out toddler on her knee and talk or sing. She told nonsense stories, more sound than substance, or sang every tune in her lifetime repertoire, from Beatles songs to ancient hymns, hypnotizing the children somehow (her sons and daughters were sure of it) into sleep, or sometimes just a dazed contentedness, tucked under her arm or under her chin, seconds, minutes, then hours ticking by, the bars of summer or winter, late-afternoon or early-morning sunlight moving across them, across the length of a room, and neither of them, adult or child, seeming to mark the time gone by.

But take a look in your freezer after she's gone, the daughters reported to one another and to the better-liked sisters-in-law as well. Nearly a full gallon eaten—or all but a final spoonful so she didn't have to put the carton in the trash and give herself away. She's welcome to it, of course, but at her age it's a weight thing. She needs to watch her weight. It's the deceptiveness, too, don't you see. What does she eat when she's alone?

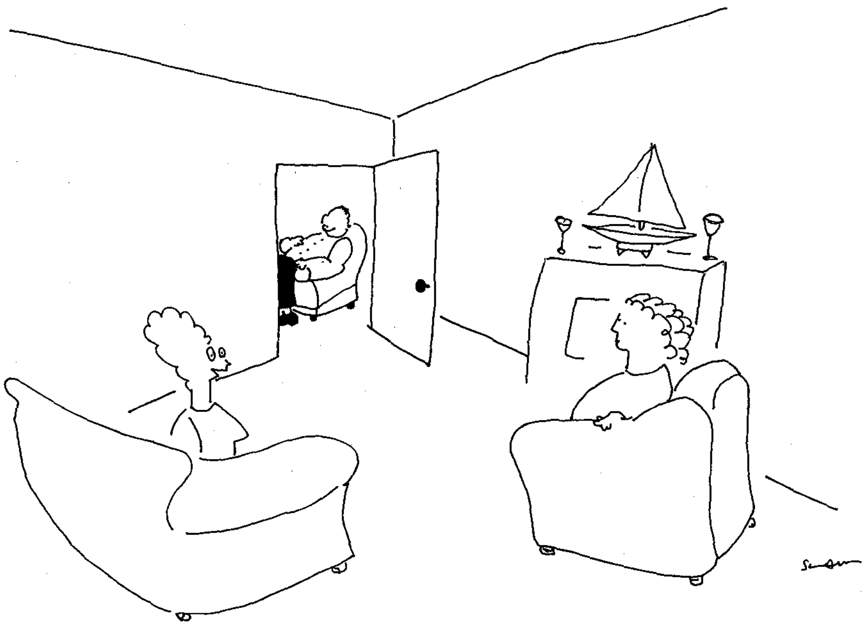
Alone, in an apartment now, ever since the night a stranger crept up the breezeway, broke the kitchen window, and made off with her purse, the portable TV, and the boxed silver in the dining room which had been her mother's, she licked chocolate pudding from the back of a spoon, sherbet, gelato, sorbet, ice cream, of course. She scraped the sides of the carton, ran a finger around the rim.

On visits to her out-of-state children she'd get up in the night, stand by the light of the refrigerator, take a few tablespoons from the gallon, or a single ice-cream bar, but always end up going back for more. A daughter-in-law found her one morning, 2 A.M., with the last chocolate/vanilla ice-cream cup and a tiny wooden spoon—leftovers from the grandchild's birthday party she had made the trip specifically to attend—and gave her such a lecture, as she put it when she got home, that you'd think she'd been shooting heroin.

It was the weight that concerned them, said her children, conferring. They were afraid it was the weight that was keeping her these days from those senior trips she used to love, from the winter vacations in Florida she'd once looked forward to. Now that the grandchildren were grown out of the need for a sitter, she should be doing more of those things, not fewer. They solicited a talking-to for their mother from her doctor, who instead reminded them all that she was past eighty and healthy enough and free to do, or not do, what she liked.

They took to stopping by to see her, on lunch hours, or before going to the grocery store, keeping their car keys in their hands, and urging her to turn off the television, to plan something, to do something. Her grandchildren, driving cars now, asked her out to their kinds of places, treated her to frothy lattes topped with whipped cream that would repeat on her the rest of the afternoon and on into the evening, despite bicarbs and antacids, until she brought herself to tell them when they called, "Thank you, dear, but I'm quite content at home."

Peach, strawberry, and reliable vanilla. Rocky road and butter pecan and mint chocolate chip. Looking at ninety and still, still, the last thing she feels at the end of each day is that longing to wrap her legs around him, around someone. The pleasure of the taste, of loading up a spoon and finishing it bit by bit, and then taking another spoonful and another—one kind of pleasure, enhanced by stealth and guilt, when it is someone else's carton, someone else's home in the middle of the night, another kind when it's her own and she carries her bowl, in full light, to the couch before the television in the living room. Forbidden youthful passion and domestic married love, something like that, anyway, if you want to extrapolate. If you want to begin with the ice-cream dishes licked clean by a girl who is now the old woman past all usefulness, closing her eyes at the first taste. If you want to make a metaphor out of her lifelong cravings, something she is not inclined to do. Pleasure is pleasure. A remnant of strawberries, a young man's hands, a newborn in your arms, or your own child's changing face. Your lips to the familiar stubble of your husband's cheek. Your tongue to the last vein of fudge in the empty carton. Pleasure is pleasure. If you have an appetite for it, you'll find there's plenty. Plenty to satisfy you—lick the back of the spoon. Take another, and another. Plenty. Never enough. ♦



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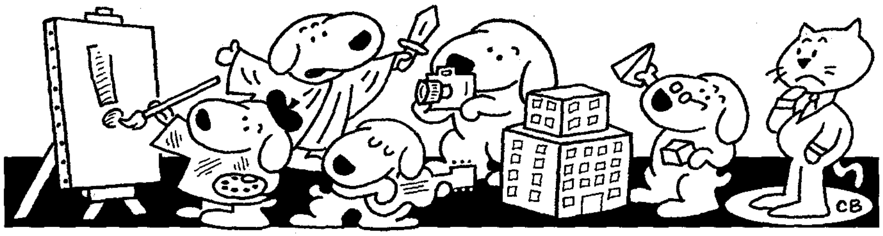


A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE LIGHT SIDE OF THE MOON

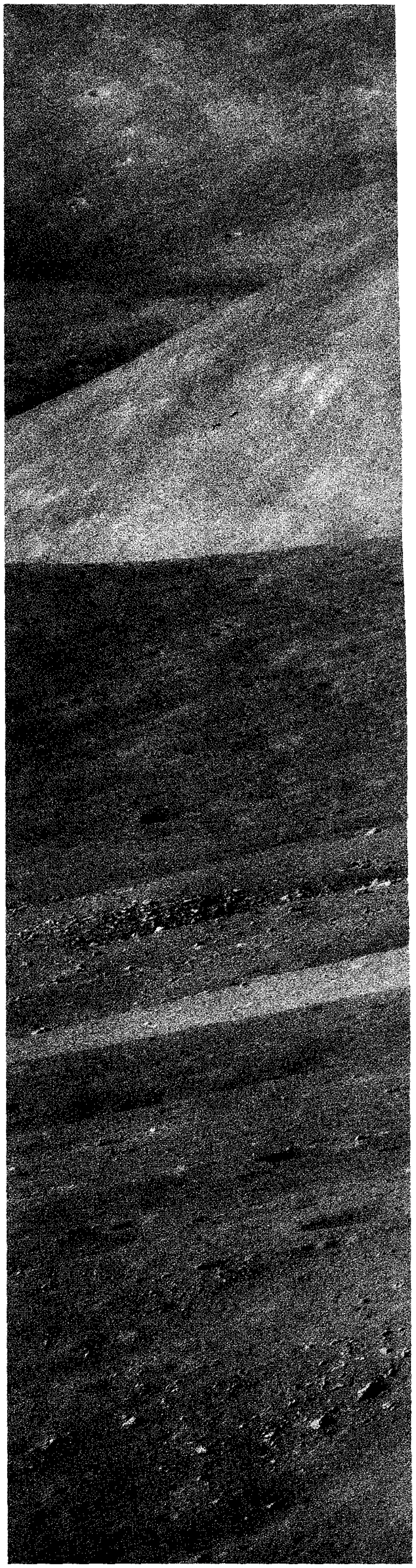
The wow factor kicks in at the new planetarium.

BY ANTHONY LANE

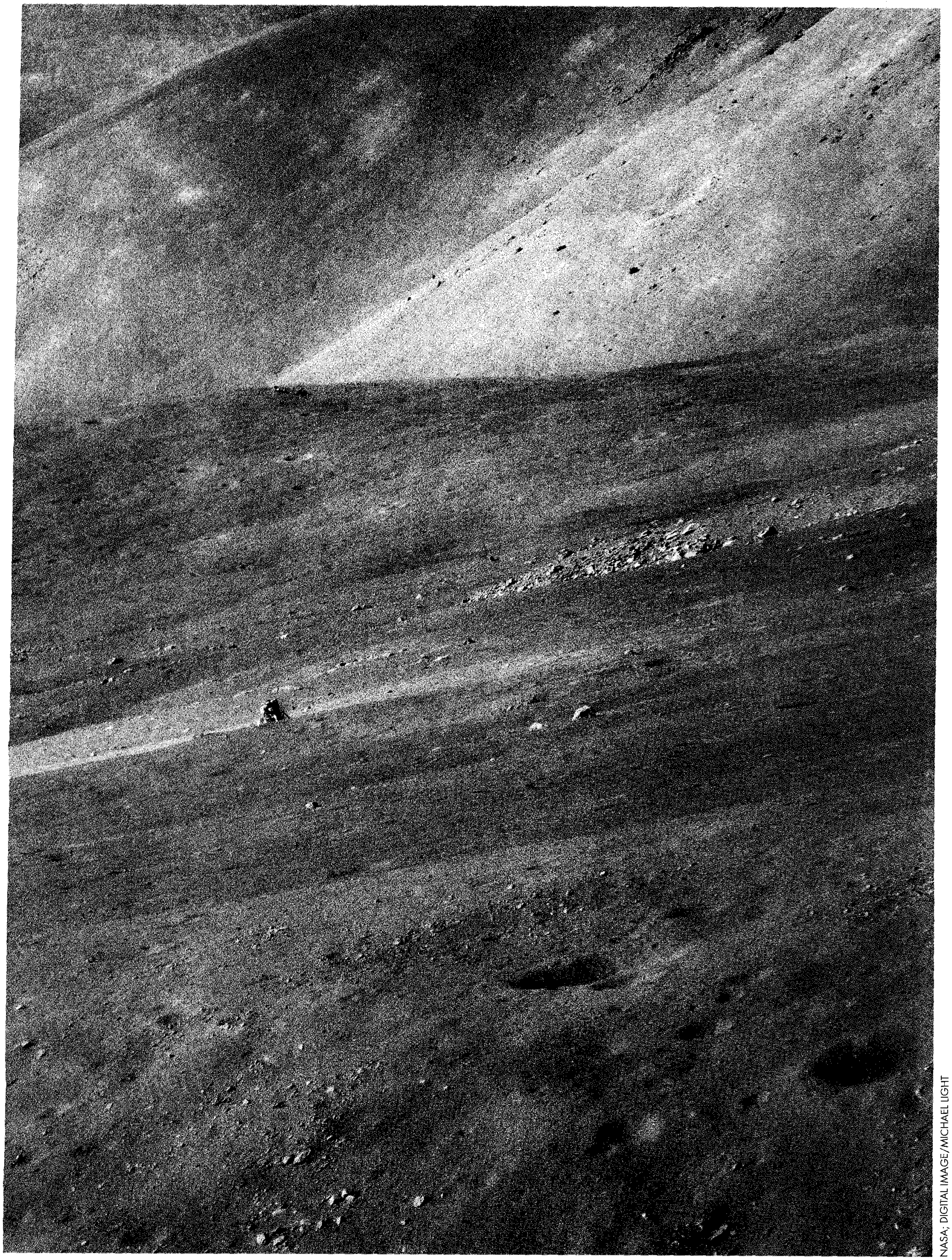
Immanuel Kant said that two things gave him constant cause for wonder: the starry firmament above and the moral law within. Both are addressed at the Rose Center for Earth and Space, the new and resplendent appendage to the American Museum of Natural History. Drivers who turn off Central Park West onto Eighty-first Street and catch sight of the new planetarium can be forgiven for losing control of their rear ends; a silver-white sphere, eighty-seven feet in diameter, hung inside a glass cube like the desk toy of an executive giant, is hardly your standard roadside attraction, even in New York. It opened to the public on February 19th; since then, visitors have been lining up to enter the sphere, like those hardy pioneers in red jumpsuits at the end of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." In the soft darkness, they sit and watch "Passport to the Universe," a thirty-minute virtual canter to the end zone of creation. After that, they are spoiled for choice: they can head for the Hall of the Universe, the Planet Zone, the Black Hole Theatre, and the Earth Event Wall, or simply cool off amid galactic merchandise. A day at the Rose Center is ample demonstration that Kant missed a trick. There are in fact three things to marvel at: the starry firmament above, the moral law within, and the specially designed bow-tie-and-cummerbund set available at the Planetarium Shop for $76.

So what happens to the moral law inside you as the show exerts its grip? How could your valuation of humanity not start to sink as the awful truth hits home? The bottom half of the sphere is filled with a brief demonstration of the big bang; as the aftershock fades, all you want is to lie back and light a cigarette, instead of which you are swiftly ushered out onto the Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn Cosmic Pathway. This spiralling ramp covers thirteen billion years of evolution; depending on your size and stride, it will take you about fifty million years to advance one step, a sensation familiar to anyone who has tried waiting for a cab outside the Port Authority on a Monday morning. The luminaries, including Mayor Giuliani, who gathered on February 16th for the official dedication of the Rose Center made a credible case for the thrill and lustre that the new exhibit will add to the city, and a slightly less trenchant case for the improvement that it will bring to our interstellar ratings. New York, we were told, has long been "the capital of the world"; from here on, it would be "the capital of the universe." Bad news, ladies and gentlemen: as far as the cosmic map is concerned, we're somewhere in a chicken coop on the outskirts of a ruined village in Chad.

Yet there is hope. Like Mr. and Mrs. Heilbrunn, we march slowly and steadily upward. Not only have we evolved to a level at which we can nurture such majestic inventions as the Hayden Planetarium, the Hubble Space Telescope, and Cameron Diaz; not only have we peered into the farthest reaches of other solar systems and wondered if that faint, spectroscopic glow could be



Images that describe experiences entirely new t



NASA; DIGITAL IMAGE/MICHAEL LIGHT

uman eyes, among them the tiny lunar module Challenger seen from almost two miles away, photographed by Eugene A. Cernan.

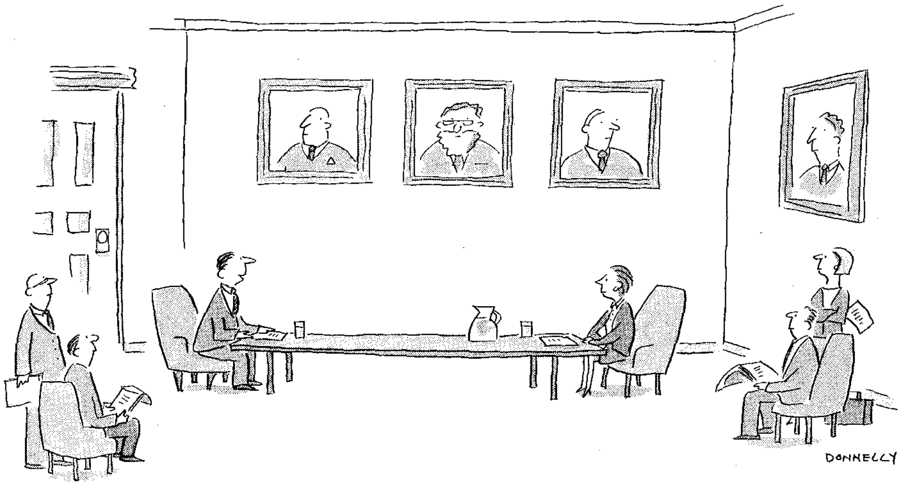
someone waving back at the camera and saying "Cheese!"; we have also, in the full courage of our cluelessness, stepped off the edge of the planet, held our breath, and taken the plunge. The space program gets a pretty bad press these days, and with some justice; it is generally agreed that, next time the boys at NASA land one of their hundred-million-dollar Lego sets on Mars, they should all try to work from the same slide rule. But there was a time—and some of us can't wait for it to come again—when breaking the surly bonds of Earth was the most pressing of scientific challenges, the sharpest spur to human enterprise, the coolest career choice, and the only way by which perfectly healthy citizens could get to suck lunch out of a tube. In retrospect, the space race was less about feeding an old spiritual hunger, let alone scoring political points, than about finding new and unsuspected hungers to sate. Reading Tom Wolfe's "The Right Stuff" or Andrew Chaikin's "A Man on the Moon," you catch barely a whisper of atomic-age leeriness; what you hear, through the jockeying of the fliers and the word-clipping static of their exchanges with Mission Control, is more like the last hurrah of the Oklahoma land rush. As with any space museum, the Rose Center needs to honor the floating sweat and free-fall exultation of life in orbit, and so, from now until September, it is showing a selection of Apollo photographs entitled "Full Moon." If your mind wilts at the thought of other people's vacation snaps, think again.

There were a dozen missions in all, starting with Apollo 1, which burned up during the launchpad test in January, 1967, and closing with Apollo 17, which staggered back to Earth with two hundred and forty-three pounds of rocks and soil under its belt, in time for Christmas, 1972. In the intervening years, the astronauts found time—it's not as if they had anything else on their hands—to take roughly seventeen thousand photographs. A further fifteen thousand were taken automatically by mapping cameras installed on the spacecraft. The cream of the crop has been picked by the artist and photographer Michael Light; last year, he arranged them into "Full Moon" (Knopf; $50)—a large, square volume that is almost comically beautiful. Now seventy-two of those images have found their way onto the walls of the Rose Center, where they split into three categories: the voyage to the moon, the trip around the moon, and the big stone ball in the sky that caused all the fuss.

When mankind first headed in that direction, nobody thought to preserve the trip for posterity; the dynamics of rocketry and orbital flight were so engrossing that poor old photography—an invention of the previous century—didn't stand a chance. As on every mission for the last forty years (most cleverly, and most fruitfully, Apollo 13), a textbook procedure needed a further touch of improvisation, of casual human marginalia; John Glenn had to go and buy himself a 35-mm. Minolta over the counter, like a tourist hoping to catch the sunset in Hawaii. Even then, NASA didn't click until Wally Schirra followed suit in the fall of 1962; he went to a Houston camera store and came back with a basic Hasselblad 500C and an 80-mm. lens, having presumably asked the salesman—as you do—what would work best in space.

He got the right answer. Hasselblads were already associated with flight; the earliest models were constructed for use by the Swedish Air Force. By the time the Apollo missions began, the NASA-Hasselblad connection was functioning smoothly; it continues to this day, and the near-mythical status of Hasselblad in medium format (the negatives are two and a quarter inches square), forever enhanced by the images from space, is rivalled only by that of Leica in 35 mm. The camera that Neil Armstrong and his team took to the moon was a customized but perfectly recognizable version of the commercial Hasselblad; the trim was stripped away, the controls were made chunkier for gloved hands, and any lubricants—not a good idea in zero gravity—had been replaced by graphite. Conspiracy nuts, inspecting the results, have declared that the lunar photographs are so good that they could never have been taken by amateurs under such testing conditions; they must therefore have been rigged under studio lights, probably by the same people who killed President Kennedy. One flaw in this argument is that astronauts are noted more for their flying skills than for their mendacity; had NASA wanted to maintain a deep pretense, it could have waited twenty years and hired Robert De Niro. The other objection is statistical; on Earth, pros will always hedge their bets by firing off multiple rolls of film in a session, and the same holds true in space. If you take thirty-two thousand photographs, some of them will come out pretty well.

They look even better these days. Michael Light has digitally scanned them, so that you can spot every wrinkle in the imprint of Buzz Aldrin's footstep. (That step, incidentally, could survive intact and uncorroded for as long as two million years, thanks to the lack of wind on the moon; if we blow ourselves up, it could be one of the few means by which other civilizations will be able to learn of our glorious existence, or, at least, of our average shoe size.) The folds and scoops of the lunar landscape, with their backdrop of permanent velvet, assume a strange, granular softness, as if they were etched in drypoint. Sometimes, the ridged tracks left by the lunar rover, dwindling toward the hills, offer the perspective you need; at other times, the reliability of the image begins to crumble. If you pride yourself on distinguishing telephoto shots, because of the way in which background and foreground squash together and shrink the depth of field, try to decipher the pictures that David Scott took of the Hadley Rille in the summer of 1971. Photographed through a 500-mm. lens, the stone-strewn floor of the valley looks gentle and close—a bend to be rounded in a few minutes' walk. Only when you pull back, and observe it through Scott's standard 80-mm. lens, does the curve resolve itself into the distant segment of a monumental canyon; the loose, kickable rocks ahead are actually boulders, up to forty-five feet wide. Kick one of those and your leg would fall off. On Earth, you would never be tricked like



"What I'm proposing, Ms. Fenner—Gail—is marriage."

this; even on the most shining day, up in the mountains and away from the smog, remote objects will start to haze in the atmosphere. Such helpful gradations of tone are unknown in the airless clarity of the moon; the yonder may be far, but it is never blue.

So what color is the moon? What we stare at in the sky is a circle of pale gray, unevenly patched; but the astronauts saw a light tan that baffled them, and some of the individual samples broke all the rules. James Irwin and Scott, on Apollo 15, found lumps of what turned out to be green glass, as if young alien partygoers had left their empty bottles behind. On board the final mission was Harrison Schmitt—a geologist, and the first scientist in space. One of the creepiest passages in Andrew Chaikin's history of the Apollo program comes when Schmitt, staring at the dust disturbed by his boots, shouts into his microphone, "It's *orange*." In the photograph taken that day, you can just make out the glow of this mystery substance—the vestige, like the glass, of ancient volcanic activity—a few yards on either side of him. The surprise is even greater because, apart from minuscule details like the wheel arches of the lunar rover and the lemony tinge of its radio dish, nothing else in this vast picture tells you that it is a color print. At first glance, you would swear that it was black-and-white. If the Apollo missions hadn't come to an end, maybe NASA would have run out of geologists and started sending up movie buffs; who better qualified to report back on a world made from film noir?

The scale of these photographs is a big issue. They were impressive enough on the page; at the Rose Center they are generously enlarged, with a corresponding increase in what astrophysicists term the Wow Factor. Some are composite images—single photographs joined at the hip, as it were, to form a linked panoramic sequence, not unlike the Polaroid constructions of David Hockney. Because of the time taken to frame each photograph, the same astronaut will sometimes appear twice, having walked, or lightly bounced, from one area of landscape to another. Then there is the jaw-dropper, the photograph that tells so dazzling or terrifying a story that you run around showing it to anyone who will look—Ken Mattingly's shot of the lunar module Orion, for instance, as it rises from the moon to dock with him in the orbiting Casper. The module is a speck, a scrap, a morsel of metal plankton, and the craters looming behind it are a thousand times bigger; you half expect them to pulsate, like jellyfish, and the idea that we dared to visit such monstrosities, let alone to depart in the assumption that we had prised open their secrets, feels impudent to the point of madness. Our relationship with unearthly things, and hence our precarious sense of self, is transformed by such grandeur; a moon the size of a mural somehow acquires a force so iconic that you wonder whether it belongs in a museum at all. You can picture it hung high in a temple, and you certainly understand the exalted place that it still holds in the religious imagination. Andrew Chaikin tells the story of Stu Roosa, the Command Module pilot on Apollo 14, who many years later visited Nepal with his wife. Some Nepalese believe that the moon is home to the spirits of their forefathers, and Joan Roosa was told, "You're married to a god."

The astronauts who appear in "Full Moon" do not look like gods. They look like coal miners hitting a rich seam. True, the visors on their helmets give off a heavenly golden glimmer, but everything else bears the scars of extraterrestrial graft. Once moondust works its way into the wrinkles of a costume, it's impossible to brush away, and if Eugene Cernan's mother could have seen him—happy but wrecked—posing for a colleague after three days on the lunar surface she would have told him to go and wash up before appearing in front of the camera. On Apollo 7, Walter Cunningham took a picture of his commander, Wally Schirra, who had a bad cold; sinuses don't drain well in space, and Schirra has the piggy eyes and puffed cheeks of a man in serious need of hot whiskey and lemon. Cunningham himself, snoozing in Earth's orbit, is hardly a pretty sight: with his rounded black shades, and his stubble even thicker than Schirra's, he makes all too clear the physical strains imposed by the Apollo enterprise. Nobly into the unknown goes the fine flower of American manliness, and back comes Lou Reed.

The most celebrated photograph—the full-length color portrait of Buzz Aldrin by Neil Armstrong—does not appear here, and you can see why. It has become the Mona Lisa of the moon gallery: repeated on a million posters, at once thinned and overburdened by familiarity. The lunar explorers were fed and sustained by fresh imagery as if it were oxygen, and the point of this exhibit is to recapture the shock of the new. So, instead of the Aldrin photograph, we get something altogether less posed and more pugnacious: Charles Conrad's head-on shot of Alan Bean, taken at Sharp Crater in 1969. Bean's arms are half splayed by the distended sleeves of his spacesuit, so that his hands hang wide of the hips; his own Hasselblad is mounted on a bracket at chest height, with a pistol grip screwed to the base. The total effect, with the lens jutting straight at us, is alarmingly close to the classic pose of the gunslinger. It suggests, with a vigor that I haven't seen since the movie of "The Right Stuff," that the astronauts' professional curiosity was overlaid by something close to confrontation. The moon didn't go all the way and turn them into wolves, but you can see how the legend arose. When you read of Armstrong switching to semi-manual control on his final approach, landing the module with only twenty seconds' worth of fuel in the tank, or of John Glenn, in the hard infancy of the space program, wrestling his capsule down through the Earth's atmosphere, you can't help feeling the heat of life at full burn.

Needless to say, the fellows in white suits kept their cool. "You cats take it easy on the lunar surface," said Mike Collins to Armstrong and Aldrin, as he unhitched Eagle and sent them on their way to the moon. Two and a half hours later, he told Charlie Duke, down in Houston, "Listen, babe, everything's going just swimmingly." Some people—writers, mostly, who would have fainted with dismay after one day of basic training—lamented that the men whom America sent into space were not articulate or impassioned enough to register the enormity of their undertaking, but such an ungrateful complaint is wrong in every respect. The astronauts knew full well that they were pioneering on behalf of a planet, and it was in the very ordinariness of their reactions that they carried the human voice—always impressionable, never free from caution, resting on dependable words when fancy ones sound too rich—across two hundred and forty thousand miles. "It's big, and bright, and beautiful," Neil Armstrong said as Eagle settled onto the surface. "Beautiful view," agreed Aldrin a while later, as he followed down the steps. "Isn't that something?" Armstrong said, as if they were stretching their legs at the end of an August picnic. When he went to the launchpad, Armstrong had in his pockets a roll of LifeSavers and a comb. After all, you never know whom you might meet.

"Full Moon" is true to this clash—the quotidian bumping gently into the unprecedented. A closer shot of Orion shows it battered and buckled by its adventures; how touching to be reminded of the lunar modules, and of the absurd, if correct, belief that human beings could be protected by metal sheeting one two-hundred-and-fiftieth of an inch thick. Beyond its frailty, however, the module also delivered a stern rebuke to the imaginings of science fiction. Well before Flash Gordon, writers and designers had favored the sleek and the symmetrical, as if the sole concern of future societies would be to iron out anything that people could trip over; yet here was a small bundle of steel that, in all its crumpled pokiness, was an unimprovable guide to the virtues of the race that made it—tenacity, teamwork, and the will to find use and even beauty in the graceless. Look at a flying saucer, on the other hand, zipping between galaxies with no more than a low hum, and you just know that the guys inside would be completely floored if you gave them a plate of ribs and no cutlery, or told them to change a flat.

It may sound odd that a tour of the Rose Center, with its clean lines and efficient sense of history, should make us proud of our shortcomings; but the effect of "Full Moon," as of the other exhibits, is not merely to trumpet our scientific ability but to drive home our delightful inability to make sense of the universe. Listen to people walking around, and the word you will hear most frequently is "like." The moon shots were a flurry of experience for which we still have no adequate points of comparison, so we just toss up as many inadequate ones as we can think of and hope that some of them stick. My notes on "Full Moon" read like this: "Bullet holes." (Four shots of the Timocharis Crater.) "Icebox." (Clouds over the Pacific Ocean, viewed from a hundred and twenty miles.) "Golf ball." (An especially pocked-looking moon; no wonder Alan Shepard packed a makeshift six-iron.) None of these are accurate, but they are as close as I can get. There is even "Vagina" (Messier Crater) next to "Sperm" (Hadley Rille); that smacks of perversity, of course, but the crater in question does lie in the Sea of Fertility, and Michael Light juxtaposes the two pictures in his book, so I guess I am not the first to see the joke. Whether Neil Armstrong would have got it is hard to say, although he and Aldrin, as they removed their helmets in the safety of the lunar module, happily traded similes over their day's work; one man thought that moondust smelled of "wet ashes in a fireplace," the other preferred "spent gunpowder." Both would be outdone by Clifford Frondell, the Harvard geologist who was present when the first box of moon rocks was opened on live television, in July, 1969. "Holy shit!" he said. "It looks like a bunch of burnt potatoes."

When words fail us, we have to make them up, and I like the tale of Ken Mattingly, as he dropped his colleagues on the surface and began his lonely vigils—made companionable by Mahler and Berlioz—on the far side of the moon. Once back in radio contact, he said, to no one in particular, "There's old Mother Earth. Man, that's a beauty, too. Never get tired of watching earthrise." The rest of us will never see it. "Earthshine" and "earthrise" are not merely neologisms; they were coined to describe experiences that were themselves entirely new, at least to human eyes, and you wonder how far the vocabulary of a lunar community would stretch. Would moon dwellers spend their cold, lonely evenings reading "Earthraker" or sitting around a digitally enhanced fire singing "Earthlight Becomes You"? There are inchoate plans to revisit the place and add to the eternal footprints, but the dream of permanent bases, either as mineheads or as staging posts for further exploration, may be the purest moonshine.

One photograph from the Apollo days is even more solidly embedded in our culture than that of a triumphant Aldrin; it is the image of Earth from space—looking, as Armstrong would say, big, and bright, and beautiful. It single-handedly jolted the environmental movement into active life, and made everyone think twice about fouling our blue skies. There is, it turned out, no place like home; but why does that mean we have to stay put? There will be other places, somewhere over the rainbow, that look like nothing on Earth, and somebody—Hasselblad in hand—should go and check them out. ♦

BOOKS

VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE!

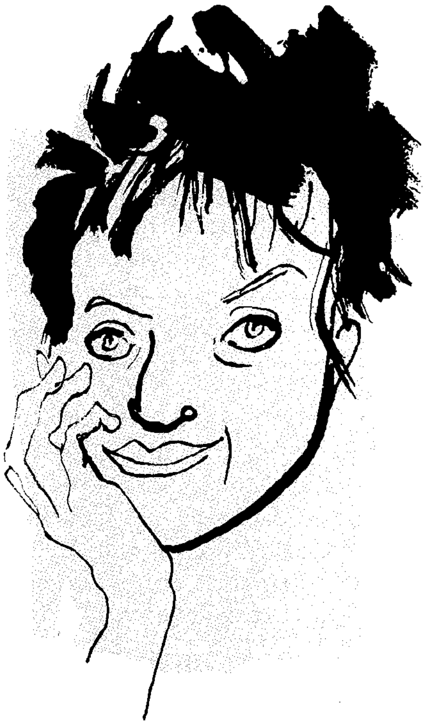
A new novel anatomizes Franco-American affairs.

BY MARY HAWTHORNE

Over the past several years, the novelist Diane Johnson has spent more and more of her time in Paris, the city where good Americans, it is said, get to go when they die. From the heart of the Sixth Arrondissement, she has lately scrutinized her well-heeled fellow-citizens, expats and natives both, filing reports with her brethren back home. Her first bulletin was the 1997 novel "Le Divorce"—part morality tale, part comedy of manners—and if it did not quite succeed in deciphering the baffling rules that govern French codes of conduct, it amusingly pointed up the particulars that make Americans feel so wanting in savoir-faire. When the California-born-and-bred Roxy is abruptly abandoned by her French husband for another woman, she says to her sister, "I thought everything was so perfect. Oh, I know I'm not French, but except for that."

Johnson's new novel, "Le Mariage" (Dutton; $23.95), is sturdy enough to hold its own, but it benefits from the renown of its more flamboyant, more surefooted predecessor, and therefore lives both in its glow and in its shadow. It, too, is preoccupied with the ways in which the Americans and the French remain dumbfounded by their differences. The author's ostensible subject is the prospective marriage between a conventional American journalist, Tim Nolinger, and a conventional French antique dealer, Anne-Sophie d'Argel, who is the daughter of a famous French novelist, Estelle d'Argel. The novel is also linked to "Le Divorce" literally, through a second, illicit alliance—between Antoine de Persand, the charming married brother of Roxy's husband, and his lonely neighbor in the country, Clara Holly.

Clara is one of those classic American creations, out of Dreiser and Hollywood, who come from nowhere—in this case, a small town in Oregon—and, by dint of their sexual allure, find themselves catapulted to stardom by men eager to exploit them for their own ends. (The beautiful Clara is too puritanical to wear anything other than plain white underwear, unlike seemingly prim middle-aged Frenchwomen.) A dozen years earlier, when Clara was twenty, she was discovered by the famous Polish-American director Serge Cray, who cast her in a cult film and married her. Now, his career in eclipse, Serge is testy and gloomy, forever struggling to finish reading "The Man Without Qualities." He spends his days in their château outside Paris, which once belonged to Mme. du Barry, conceiving his next great film. It's the eve of the millennium, and he has something vaguely apocalyptic in mind.



Diane Johnson

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

Serge's obsession with apocalypse is what accidentally brings the two couples together. Through his journalistic contacts, Tim learns that a rare illuminated manuscript concerning apocalyptic prophecy has been stolen from the Morgan Library, and that Serge might be approached by the thief as a possible purchaser. Using this information to gain access to Cray, he quickly becomes attracted to the voluptuous Clara—a development not lost on his wedding-focussed fiancée. As doubt descends on the young couple, Johnson's novel, like a Russian nesting doll, begins emptying out subplot after subplot, to dizzying effect.

Like Jane Austen, Johnson delights in the worldly rituals surrounding courtship and marriage, but she is just as interested in the far-reaching legal consequences of marital unions and disunions, and in what laws can reveal about the cultures they are enlisted to defend. The novel's most engaging subplot involves the Loi Verdeille, the ancient French right to hunt on private lands. Both Serge and Clara are politically correct animal-rights sympathizers, horrified by the barbarism of French hunting rituals and furious about a law that impinges on their property rights. (Ruby Ridge is the novel's foil to the Loi Verdeille.) When a group of hunters, who include the mayor and the Crays' neighbor Antoine, visit Serge to protest his dogs and his reinforced fencing, he remains intransigent, but the clever mayor takes note of the château's renovated interiors; a few days later, the police arrive and pack not Serge but a bewildered Clara off to jail. The charge: desecration of a national monument.

Suddenly, the pervasive idiosyncrasies of French culture are no longer amusing but as oppressive and terrifying as the mammoth wooden doors of the jail at Versailles: "Clara had not thought before that wood, blackened, ancient oak, patined by the centuries of misery they had seen, could be more final and grim than metal. They conjured centuries of royal power and indifference, brutality, boiling oil." And yet the comic is never far behind. In the course of her nightmarish confinement, Clara is visited not by her

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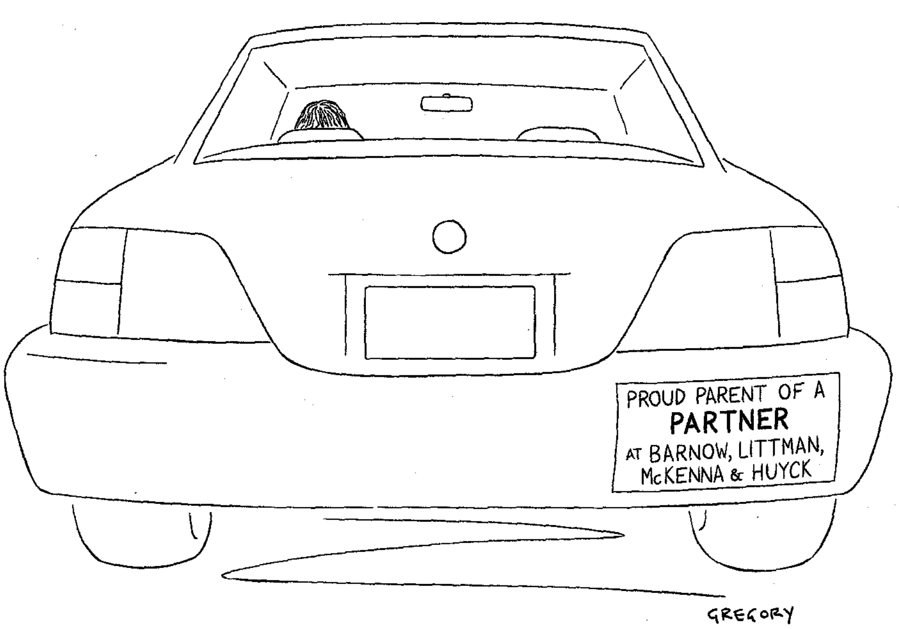

PROUD PARENT OF A PARTNER AT BARNOW, LITTMAN, McKENNA & HUYCK
GREGORY

• •

husband but by Antoine, whom, in her despair and confusion, she immediately propositions. (“Perhaps it was akin to what hostages felt for their captors, some bizarre form of imprinting.”) The passionate liaison that ensues becomes the counterpart of the younger couple’s stressful march toward marriage. Meanwhile, Clara’s plight becomes a cause célèbre, uniting the American community against the excesses of the host country, and uniting the French in their condemnation of the Americans—“a perfect example,” according to one French intellectual, “of how the innate American desire for hegemony . . . was attempting to interfere with the centuries-old traditions of France.”

Finally, after a madcap trip to Oregon with Serge to find Clara’s mother, who appears to have been abducted by right-wing millennialists (Serge gleefully sees film possibilities everywhere), domestic stability is restored. Tim and Anne-Sophie make their way to the altar, taking the vows that have secured the more or less orderly functioning of society for centuries. Tellingly, though, the happiest people at the end of the book are not necessarily the bride and groom, whose hesitancies and ambivalence Johnson depicts with touching emotional truth. (“The strains of Bach, then of Beethoven—the Hymn to Joy? Impossible hypocrisy,” Tim thinks during the ceremony. “Why hadn’t he reviewed the music?”) Rather, Johnson suggests that marriage is a rite of passage, after which the participants are paradoxically free—and almost expected—to follow the laws of their hearts.

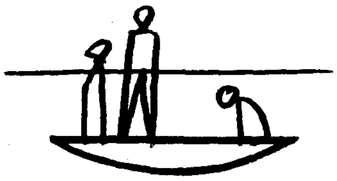
As for Johnson, she is a philosopher as much as a novelist—an aphorist who distills the essence of cultural differences. She is far more interested in how particular character types interact with one another in what often prove to be extreme, even absurd, situations than she is in deep psychological analysis. After all, for the most part her characters are concerned with the bourgeois basics—sex and food and money, apartments on the right floors in the right *quartiers*. In the end, it’s Johnson’s insights that account for the charm of these books, not her characters’, and, coming upon her description of the cynical Estelle d’Argel, we sense an impish wink to the reader. “As an intellectual and a novelist,” she writes, “Estelle was naturally also a person of unusual pessimism, even malice, qualities that had worsened with age. . . . Her novels, of course, retained the characteristic mixture of earthy sensuality and astute judgments about human nature that had made her reputation.” ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Romantics, *by Pankaj Mishra (Random House; $23.95).* Samar, the narrator of this melancholy bildungsroman, is a student of modest circumstances and grandiose yearnings who seeks his fortune in the big city; soon after his arrival, he falls in with people more privileged and more worldly than he is. The city is not Paris or New York but Benares, and before Samar shelves his Turgenev and Schopenhauer in the octagonal niches of his tiny rented room, he must first remove the Hindu statues that customarily reside there. His new friends are Westerners, similarly uprooted: an acerbic Englishwoman, an American hippie, a French girl who has fallen in love with a sitar player. The sparks of sympathy between Samar and these exotic acquaintances are genuine, the chasms unbridgeable. "In trying to correct their notions of India," Samar observes sadly, "I became false to myself and others."

Make Believe, *by Joanna Scott (Little, Brown; $23.95).* When three-year-old Bo's mother, Jenny, is killed in a car wreck, a custody fight ensues between his two sets of grandparents: the Gilberts, who are black, and the Gantzes, who are white. Scott is such a fine and subtle writer that even an event as compelling as the firestorm of love and recrimination that erupts around Bo becomes almost incidental in comparison with her passionate exploration of the interior lives of her subjects. So steady and particular is the strong light of her gaze that each character—spurred equally by hope and anger—is brilliantly illuminated.

Genome, *by Matt Ridley (HarperCollins; $26).* An extraordinarily nimble synthesist, Ridley leaps from chromosome to chromosome in a handy summation of our ever increasing understanding of the roles that genes play in disease, behavior, sexual differences, and even intelligence. More important, though, he addresses not only the ethical quandaries faced by contemporary scientists but the reductionist danger in equating inheritability with inevitability. Providing ample and provocative illustration, he recasts the nature-nurture conflict, announcing, "The brain, the body and the genome are locked, all three, in a dance. The genome is as much under the control of the other two as they are controlled by it."



The Best Thing I Ever Tasted, *by Sallie Tisdale (Riverhead; $25.95).* Most writers on cooking and eating are engaged in an ongoing love affair with the kitchen, but Tisdale, whose last book was about sex, has so little feeling for her subject that she might have picked it out of a hat. The result is a messy compendium of culinary history larded with unappetizing childhood anecdotes. Crankiness itself is no impediment to good writing about the table, but Tisdale is simply peevish—about Betty Crocker, fusion cooking, Gorgonzola, Alice Waters, and making (or skipping) dinner. Only Peg Bracken, author of "The I Hate to Cook Book," escapes a potshot, and here, too, Tisdale misses the point: Bracken was hostile, all right, but she had a real affection for grub, and she was funny.

Database Nation, *by Simson Garfinkel (O'Reilly; $24.95).* If you want a good scare, you could go on-line and download the latest Stephen King, or you could read this book, which explains how corporations keep track of things like—well, what you've just downloaded. Computers monitor your credit-card purchases, insurance firms document your medical conditions, and phone companies have a record of every call you make. And such information is readily available to marketer and malefactor alike—not that Garfinkel makes much of a distinction between the two. Other writers have raised alarms, but no one has revealed the encroachments of technology on privacy in such exacting detail. Living in the global village, it seems, is like living in a real one: you have to deal with a whole lot of busybodies.

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE GODFATHER

At seventy-five, Pierre Boulez is still laying down the law.

BY ALEX ROSS

These days, Pierre Boulez—composer, conductor, administrator, lawgiver, autocrat, éminence grise—is an affable, even mellow presence. He ends every performance with a self-effacing shrug, and quickly jumps off the podium in order to stand among the players. Last month, as part of a worldwide celebration of his seventy-fifth birthday, he led the London Symphony in four concerts at Carnegie Hall, and he seemed embarrassed by all the attention. The former hit man of modern music is now a bit like Brando's Don Corleone—he no longer needs to make a display of his power.

As the orchestra launched into "Happy birthday to Pierre," it would have been convenient to forget that Boulez in his youth was a terror. In a 1952 polemic entitled "Eventually . . . ," he wrote, with typical bluntness, "Why not play the sniper for a few moments?" He played the sniper often; he had excellent aim; he created, in the years following the Second World War, a climate of intellectual fear. He announced the supremacy of atonal, twelve-tone composition in the following terms: "Any musician who has not experienced . . . the necessity for the dodecaphonic language is USELESS." The statement was arguable. Ned Rorem, for one, responded, "Omit the word 'not,' and I would agree." Yet many composers were intimidated by this young man's table-pounding certitude. Both Aaron Copland and Igor Stravinsky took up twelve-tone writing immediately after encountering Boulez. Even the most august composers were desperate to please him.

Not since Wagner had a composer played the bully to such effect. Boulez's tactics were exuberantly brutal: he compared himself several times to the Bolsheviks and to the Chinese Red Guards. He placed Stravinsky in his neoclassical period at the head of the "useless." He accused Schoenberg, after his death, of the "most ostentatious and obsolete romanticism." Webern was "too simple." Berg suffered from "bad taste," Ravel from "affectation." Twelve-tone music in its extant form was overrun by "number-fanatics" who engaged in "frenetic arithmetic masturbation." Boulez's teacher, Olivier Messiaen, produced "brothel music." John Cage, who was at one time an ally of Boulez, became a "performing monkey," and Karlheinz Stockhausen, likewise, a "hippie." The American minimalists displayed a "supermarket aesthetic," the American serialists had a "cashier's point of view." Brahms was a "bore," Tchaikovsky "abominable," Verdi "stupid, stupid, stupid!" And so on.

Boulez has stopped issuing proclamations of this kind, but no one should be fooled into thinking that he has changed his mind. His programs are still notable as much for what they exclude as for what they include; the borders of the canon are still tightly guarded. The great ones—their shortcomings now forgiven—are Debussy, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, and Stravinsky. A few contemporaries—Harrison Birtwistle, György Ligeti, and Elliott Carter—have written music of sufficient density to be worthy of attention. And of course there are Boulez's own works—although his habit of incessantly revising them suggests that even they do not please him entirely. I'm reminded of a scene in Jacques Tati's "Mon Oncle," in which the oblivious Monsieur Hulot, seeking to restore symmetry to a damaged plant, trims a little on one side, trims a little on the other, and continues going back and forth until there's not much left.

Boulez arrived in Paris from the provinces in 1942. His first significant act was to boo loudly at an all-Stravinsky concert. As a Schoenbergian atonalist, he condemned what he considered Stravinsky's antiquated stylistic games. But

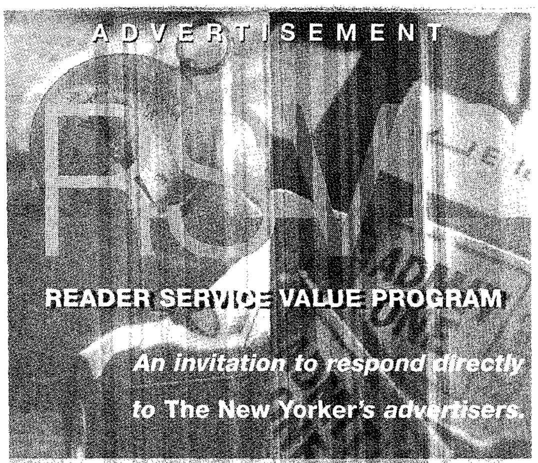
Boulez conducting the London Symphony Orchestra: A clear but claustrophobic view of the music of our time. Photograph by Steve Pyke.

MATRIX

he also found himself dissatisfied with twelve-tone music as it was then practiced. He was bothered by the fact that Schoenberg had radicalized harmony but still treated rhythm and form in traditional, even hackneyed ways. So he began working toward the idea of "serialism," in which durations, dynamics, and instrumental attacks were organized along the same principles that governed the twelve-tone series. He achieved a mode of writing that was, if nothing else, internally consistent.

The fact that Milton Babbitt arrived at a similar method at about the same time shows that something was in the air. But Boulez's music had a different temperature from Babbitt's. It was frenzied and fragmented where Babbitt's was neat and mercurial. Even in the fifties and sixties, as Boulez abandoned strict serialism and began to write in a more fluid, impressionist style, he remained a composer of vibration, activity, unrest. He set the profile of "modern music" as it is popularly conceived and as it is still widely practiced—a rapid sequence of jabbing gestures, like the squigglings of a seismograph.

Boulez's early works retain their assaultive force, as Maurizio Pollini demonstrated two weeks ago when he unleashed the Second Piano Sonata on Carnegie Hall. Later compositions, however, are more uncertain in tone. In 1981, Boulez produced "Répons," a large piece for soloists, chamber orchestra, and electronics, and has continued tinkering with it ever since. This was the flagship project for IRCAM, the electronic-music institute that Boulez founded in Paris in 1977. A recent Deutsche Grammophon recording of "Répons" makes one sympathize with the complaints that have been directed at IRCAM over the past two decades; the institute has sucked up the lion's share of public money for contemporary French music, but its costly syn-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thesizer, the 4X, sounds unremarkable and a little antiquated in the digital age. Boulez's instrumental writing, meanwhile, has settled into a familiar set of mannerisms: a steady alternation of held notes and rapid figuration; a heavy reliance on drones, trills, tremolos, and other effects of filigree; a weakness for splashy percussion.

His major work of the nineties was "sur Incises," for three pianos, three harps, and percussion. The Ensemble Intercontemporain played it last November at Carnegie Hall. It looked amazing: black pianos glowered amid the yellow shimmer of harps and the golden ambience of Carnegie. The musical effect, too, was pictorial: the piece offered a sequence of intriguing and often beautiful textures, one after the other, and then it simply stopped. The Ensemble also presented "Anthèmes II," a 1997 work for violin and electronics. The busy arpeggiation in the violin part had a Bachian flavor and threatened to lapse into G major at the end. Amid a welter of electronic echo-chamber effects and a touch of purplish lighting, the piece took on an unexpectedly trippy, New Age air.

What of Boulez the conductor and new-music guru? Works in the London Symphony mini-festival fell into three categories: first, those written for the series, by Peter Eötvös, Salvatore Sciarrino, Olga Neuwirth, and George Benjamin; then those that Boulez might consider "modern classics," by Ligeti, Luciano Berio, and Boulez himself; and, finally, masterpieces from the first half of the century, by Mahler, Schoenberg, Berg, Bartók, and Stravinsky. The new works were a mixed bag. Only Benjamin's "Palimpsest" displayed a distinctive musical personality. Moving uneasily between withdrawn, chant-like episodes and outbursts of full-orchestral violence, it seemed like a well-observed portrait of Boulez himself. Eötvös's "zeroPoints" was a riot of brilliant orchestration, little more. Sciarrino's "Recitativo Oscuro," with its grunting bassoon ostinatos, created an atmosphere of expectation that subsequent events failed to satisfy; the piece came across as an unnecessarily elongated transitional episode. Neuwirth's "Clinamen/Nodus" aspired, in the composer's words, to be an "accumulation of fragments," and succeeded.

Conducting the twentieth-century masters, Boulez was in his element, although some of his choices were strange. Bartók's early ballet "The Wooden Prince" is not Bartók at his best, and in this low-energy performance it became interminable. Schoenberg's "Pelleas und Melisande" fared better, although it, too, threatened to drown in its own orchestration. Perhaps Boulez wanted to program some late-Romantic tone poetry in order to give his audience a spell of easy listening, but he could not reach outside his circle of canonical modernist figures, and so was limited to works of youthful excess. Boulez's great virtues as a conductor are transparency and balance; he is not so good at character and contrast. He gave Mahler's Sixth Symphony an uncommon lucidity but took away its ironies and neuroses. Stravinsky's "Pétrouchka" was carried off with miraculous finesse, even though, as in the Mahler, the score's spirit of parody went missing. Only Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra showed the conductor at the top of his game: the orchestra made everything clear and held nothing back.

Boulez's programming is tied to a teleological theory of musical history; it spotlights assorted radical gestures in an effort to illustrate the alleged dissolution of tonality. But this narrative has itself become useless. It excludes far too many major twentieth-century composers—Sibelius, Shostakovich, and Britten, among others—to be considered a fair survey of the field. Although Boulez has lately broadened his repertory, in the course of a massive recording project for D.G., certain of his performances sound dutiful. In 1988, he said of Stravinsky's neoclassical works, "I personally will never find them very exciting, that's for sure." A new disk of the "Symphony of Psalms" and the Symphony in Three Movements doesn't suggest that he is excited by them now.

Boulez's appearances at Carnegie Hall this season were well attended, and with good reason. Audiences receive from him a guarantee of quality: there will be nothing vulgar or cheap. But the series had a claustrophobic atmosphere. It said more about the taste of a great but ungenerous artist than about the state of music in the year 2000. ♦

LORENZO MATTOTTI

THE THEATRE

POP GOES AIDA

A trip down the Nile with Elton John and Tim Rice.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

It is impossible to walk into "Aida," the new musical by Elton John and Tim Rice, without having mixed expectations based solely on the fact that the show is a Disney production. Disney is the King of the Entertainment Jungle, so we have reason to think that we're in good hands, partly because those hands are themselves supported by a large cushion of cash. At the same time, we are resentful of the company's dominion over popular culture: with its movies, videos, stage musicals, books, cable channel, theme parks, and stores filled with T-shirts, toys, and tchotchkes, Disney has seen to it that even those who don't want to dwell inside the Magic Kingdom have a hard time escaping the long shadow of its walls.

At some point in a Disney experience, however—usually as soon as the movie starts, or the curtain goes up—the dilemma dissolves, at least for the duration of the entertainment, as you find yourself surrendering to the product's inevitable charms and, in fact, enjoying your captivity. And so it goes with "Aida." The show has been overhauled significantly since it opened in Atlanta a year and a half ago (a huge motorized pyramid was abandoned after that production—as were the director, the designers, the choreographer, and the male lead), and was further retooled during a run in Chicago and during its New York previews at the Palace, and when I saw it, the night before it opened, it struck me as a winner. Which isn't the same thing as saying I liked it; it's saying that I was weirdly aware of looking at the show as if I were a stockholder, or a Disney marketeer assessing its potential for success. But I did like it, and though I'm a little embarrassed to admit my affection for the Microsoft of the entertainment world, I'd be more embarrassed not to, because at a certain point (say, after about two paragraphs) it would be unseemly not to acknowledge my appreciation for the talent, the inventiveness, and the care that go into making Disney productions—both the movies and the shows—so successful and so much fun. It would be a little like complaining about a chef because he keeps cooking you one good meal after another.

"Aida," which is under the mostly solid direction of Robert Falls, the artistic director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre, doesn't reach for the emotional extremes that are the signature of Verdi's masterpiece. You won't find any songs in it that contain all the interwoven strands of love, hate, jealousy, vengeance, and regret that run through the opera. In this "Aida," the characters are not bewitched; they are merely bothered and bewildered. What you will find is Elton John's lovely melodies, catchy hooks, bittersweet ballads, and delicious harmonies. You will also, however, find Tim Rice's plodding and clunky lyrics. Take these lines from the title-impaired song "Enchantment Passing Through": "My triumph is the triumph of a slaver / My riches are the riches of a thief / And now I wonder just who is the braver / The man who's called to arms, or a belief?" Is there a Dr. Hammerstein in the house?

Of the three leads, Heather Headley (Aida), Sherie René Scott (Amneris), and Adam Pascal (Radames), Headley—who originated the role of Nala in the stage version of "The Lion King"—has received the most attention, partly because her role is the least cartoonish in the show. "Aida" is no longer the raging campfest that it was reported to be in its early days, but an undeniable jokiness still clings to it. Headley's role, though, calls for gravity, a regal bearing, and emotional directness; she has all that, and a rich, resonant voice as well. I also liked Sherie René Scott, whose Amneris is transformed from a bubbleheaded Valley girl (Nile Valley, that is), concerned only

Disney's "Aida" has an undeniable jokiness, but Heather Headley's rich, resonant voice and regal bearing give it heft.

with clothes and shoes, into an embodiment of more queenly virtues—wisdom, maturity, beneficence. You can imagine Headley performing any kind of song in any venue, but Scott, who made her Broadway début in "The Who's Tommy," projects a show-bizzy spirit that is specific to musical theatre—in the best sense, she's a Broadway baby. (And how fitting it is that she grew up on a farm in Kansas.) Scott has good fun with "My Strongest Suit," a Motownish production number featuring a nutty, eye-popping parade of models wearing wild candy-colored costumes and trippy, Versace-meets-the-Jetsons headgear. It stops the show, partly because it has absolutely nothing to do with the show, but also because it's a kind of suitably over-the-top homage to the show's composer: to his flareups of flamboyance and his friendships with Gianni Versace and Princess Diana, who is unmistakably a model for Amneris. The number is a hoot, and not intended to pull your heartstrings, but it does, somehow, touch them a little. As Radames, Adam Pascal, with his none-too-commanding acting ability and his limited, pop-rock voice, lacks the stature of a warrior, or of a man who is the love object of not one but two princesses.

The most valuable player in "Aida," in any case, isn't someone you see or hear onstage: it's Bob Crowley, who designed the breathtakingly brilliant sets. Crowley (who also designed the costumes, some of which are hilarious in the wrong way) is a genius at creating images—in "Carousel" and in "The Capeman," for instance—that are like nothing you've ever seen before but seem exactly right. At least one of his creations for "Aida" is so dazzling in its unexpectedness that I can't bear to give away the surprise, but everything Crowley does here—from a backdrop showing trees reflected in a river to an Escher-like evocation of a jail—is memorable.

There's still room for improvement in "Aida," but it looks like Disney's done it again. And you can't argue with success—well, yes, you can, but you may find, at the end of "Aida," that you're drowned out by the sound of your own applause.

Anna Deavere Smith's most recent work, "House Arrest: A Search for American Character In and Around the White House, Past and Present," which she is performing at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre through April 16th, is the latest in her ongoing series of examinations of the American social fabric. If Walt Whitman heard America singing, Smith hears America talking: for two earlier, acclaimed pieces, she interviewed hundreds of people—witnesses, participants, victims—about the Crown Heights riots in 1991 ("Fires in the Mirror"), and about the riots that erupted in Los Angeles in 1992, following the first trial of the police officers who beat Rodney King ("Twilight"), then made a selection of the voices and performed them onstage. Her monologues became a dialogue with the audience about the abiding issues of race and power in this country—a dialogue audiences continued after they left the theatre. Some of the people she spoke to then were nationally known, but most of them were people whose faces would be recognizable only in their own communities. In bringing their voices to us, Smith was bringing us news.

In "House Arrest," which has been in the works for five years, Smith brings us largely old news, spoken by voices that we have heard many, many times before: voices of politicians (Presidents Clinton and Bush, Ann Richards, Gary Hart); journalists; assorted media people (Ed Bradley, Ken Burns, George Stephanopoulos); and eminent historians whose works are readily available. In a departure from her usual style, she reads passages by and about people who were unavailable for interviews (Jefferson, on his assessment of the innate abilities of black people; Lincoln, on a dream about being assassinated), and also, in some scenes, includes her own tape-recorded voice asking questions. We hear Smith asking Clinton, around the time of Whitewater, "Do you think you are treated like a common criminal?," which is the equivalent of giving candy to a baby, and the President, whose sympathy for himself springs eternal, gobbles it up. He responds, in part, "I was so naïve that I really believed them when they said if you were honest and forthright it would clear the air." Smith plays slow-pitch softball with these people, who take the opportunity to hit the ball exactly where they want to. Still, they do sometimes say things that are revealing, as people whose careers rely on their not revealing themselves invariably will. Ed Bradley, for example, to illustrate the non-earthshaking point that the President is a captive of the White House, that he "can't just pick up and go," says to Smith, "You can walk out here today and decide, Well, let me run over to Barneys. I need to pick this thing up." What Bradley is telling us here is that *he* shops at Barneys, and his use of the word "need" in this context says something about his socioeconomic status. (Most people don't "need" to pick anything up at Barneys, because they can't afford to shop at Barneys.) He has revealed something, but has he illuminated anything?

Smith has difficulty finding a thematic focus for "House Arrest." She appears to be trying to understand what it's like to live in the fishbowl of the White House, and how a public figure must privately negotiate questions of honor and honesty with himself. But that doesn't explain why we hear the former director of Operation Rescue talking about God, the Bible, and abortion; Ann Richards talking about the lunch that President Kennedy was supposed to have attended the day he was killed; a woman in prison talking about doing nothing to stop her boyfriend from killing her daughter; and the chef Alice Waters talking about the all-peach meal she would have liked to serve President Clinton when he was at her famous restaurant.

By now, Smith is herself a famous artist, and artistically she seems distracted by the access she has to just about anybody important. But none of these people need Smith—they, too, have access to just about anybody important—in the way that the people whose stories she told in her earlier shows did. They needed *someone*, and they were lucky enough to have been discovered by Smith in the days when she had her ear to the ground. In "House Arrest," with a couple of exceptions—her portrayal of Studs Terkel's jumbly, ebullient observations, her moving depiction of Franklin Roosevelt's cook—Smith serves up subjects notable for their canned honesty and rehearsed spontaneity. As long as she stays at the insiders' ball, her "search for American character" isn't going to go anywhere. Let's hope that by the next time this uniquely gifted performer brings a show to New York she will have found a way to start a fire in her own mirror. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

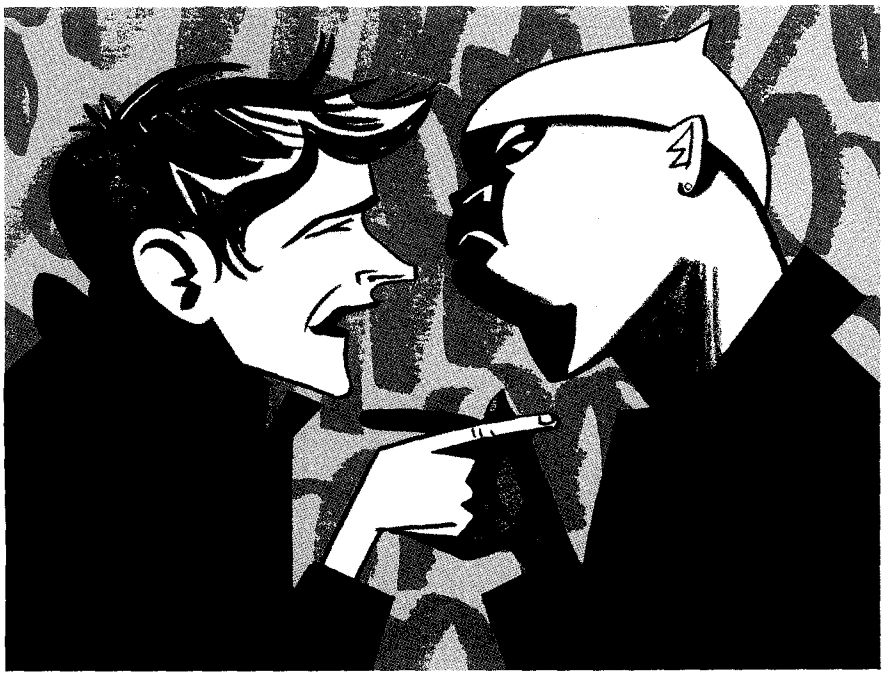
OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Whites and rappers, and two New York legends.

BY DAVID DENBY

In the funniest and most characteristic scene in James Toback's "Black and White," Mike Tyson, playing himself, wants to be left alone, and a fashionable white couple is so excited by being in the same room with him—a violent black man—that they won't give him any peace. First, the husband, Terry (Robert Downey, Jr.), who is gay, comes on to him. "I had a dream about you," he says. To which Tyson, very mildly, replies, "I'm on parole, brother. Please." Standing at a window, he just wants to look at the view, and his tone is almost imploring: Don't do this. But when Terry persists, Tyson loses his patience and slaps him, knocking him to the ground. Well, there's the glamour of violence for you—a swat to the kisser, and it hurts. Somewhat later the same evening, Terry's wife, Sam (Brooke Shields), who is making a video documentary about white kids' fascination with the hip-hop scene, also comes on to Tyson, and this time he withdraws without a slap. Tyson has intimated to the press that he felt used by Toback, but I would say that he's been comparatively well used. Wary and sly, his eyes glinting behind narrowed lids, Tyson emerges from the movie with something like dignity; the whites in the movie do not.

It's hardly a secret that white teen-agers form a good part of the audience for rap music, and that some of them, without a trace of irony, sling on black attitudes, language, and fashions. Toback pushes all this a few steps further, eroticizes the situation, and touches a nerve: "Black and White" is a dangerous comedy, by turns earnest and malicious. Toback is trying to get at the way that privileged white kids fall into a scene that represents the freedoms—of sex, aggression, selfhood—that they think they don't have in their own lives. Charlie (Bijou Phillips), a lost teen-ager with a gold tooth, and Will (William Lee Scott), a pathetic hanger-on—both from well-to-do families—go beyond



Identity games: William Lee Scott and Oli (Power) Grant in "Black and White."

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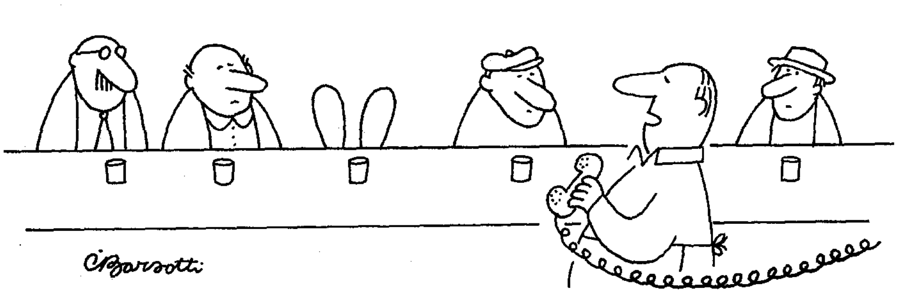

"Anyone here named Hippity?"

• •

imitation. Opportunistic and abashed at the same time, they are drawn to Rich (Oli "Power" Grant), a rap entrepreneur who is openly a thug; Charlie becomes a sex toy, Will a messenger and, finally, an executioner.

The African-American characters surrounding Rich (including Raekwon and Method Man, from the rap group Wu-Tang Clan) grudgingly accept the white kids' attentions. They have to: Rich and his crew want to keep rap authentically theirs, but they need white lawyers to negotiate their deals; and they need the white audience and the serious money that crossover can deliver. Toback's joke is that both groups are playing identity games. The blacks are trying to leave the ghetto without losing the anger that makes them appealing as pop-cult outlaws. The whites are slumming without giving up their option to return home to Daddy when they get in trouble. The movie is charged by this dialectic of contrary motives, the identities shifting back and forth and occasionally touching as they pass.

Toback, who wrote the screenplays for "The Gambler" and "Bugsy," and directed "Fingers," "The Pick-Up Artist," and "Two Guys and a Girl," is clearly on to something important. Aflame with ambition, he's trying to write a big contemporary novel on film. There are something like ten major characters on the screen, and though much of the writing is incisive, and even powerful, a few of the scenes have a sketched-in feeling to them. Emotions and ideas just get stated, baldly; we have to take them on faith (and sometimes we can't). At its best, however, "Black and White" has the oxygen-sharp, caught-on-the-run quality of some of Godard's movies from thirty years ago, like "Masculin-Féminin" and "Weekend," which were also fragile and journalistic. "Black and White" was handsomely shot, by David Ferrara, with a gliding camera that moves through rooms as people enter the frame, talk, argue, and then leave. The unstable compositions catch the looseness of the social arrangements—the tentativeness of the links between black and white.

In person, James Toback is a whirlwind of words, and he has made the characters hyperarticulate. Much of the talk is explosive and profane in the Scorsese manner, but not all of it. Toback has his wistful and ruminative side, and he's good at the comedy of self-consciousness. Downey's man on the make is perhaps the most successful of Toback's comic creations—he speaks the language of sensitivity but quickly shifts his ground when he senses a rebuff, only to relaunch himself instantly when he sees another tiny opening. But "Black and White" has dead spots, too. Toback may be tough with his double-dealing characters, but he plays some dicey games himself—casting celebrities, for instance, and hoping that they'll spark interest in his movie without mucking it up. In the case of Mike Tyson, Toback gets away with it: the fallen champ now carries a burden of rue around with him which has become, willy-nilly, an actor's armature. But Power Grant, who is Wu-Tang Clan's executive producer, doesn't come across. His Rich is menacing but muffled; his eyes don't engage the camera, his voice almost dies in his throat. And Toback flops altogether with the Knicks star Allan Houston and the supermodel Claudia Schiffer, who are supposed to be lovers. They mesh as a couple about as well as Woody Allen and Grace Jones would, and Schiffer's character, who inexplicably betrays everyone, is so perfidious that she seems a figment out of some paranoid male fantasy.

Toback sets up so many tensions that he can't resolve them—the movie just stops, skidding to the end with some silent scenes running along the final credits. Perhaps material about race and ambivalence and the violence of attraction and distrust can't be resolved satisfactorily right now. I can't help noticing, however, that the recent "Boiler Room" also just came to a halt. The liveliest movies of the year don't seem finished, and maybe we have to accustom ourselves to a different kind of art, one in which formal perfection is relinquished in favor of catching an elusive and belligerent moment before it vanishes forever.

Ian Holm was born in Goodmayes, England, and Joe Gould came from Norwood, Massachusetts, but it's hard to imagine that anyone could be more authentic than Sir Ian in the role of Gould, the Greenwich Village bohemian, genius, drunkard, bum, and faker, whom the reporter Joseph Mitchell immortalized in two pieces written for this magazine, the first in 1942, the second in 1964. Holm is almost seventy, but in "Joe Gould's Secret," the movie that the actor and director Stanley Tucci and the writer Howard A. Rodman have fashioned from Mitchell's material, Holm darts around Village streets and bars like a water bug. Lousy and hungover after a night in a flophouse, his Joe Gould pulls at his beard furiously, rants, crows, and growls—the role has the largest vocal and temperamental range of anything Holm has done in movies. Holm, I would guess, drew on

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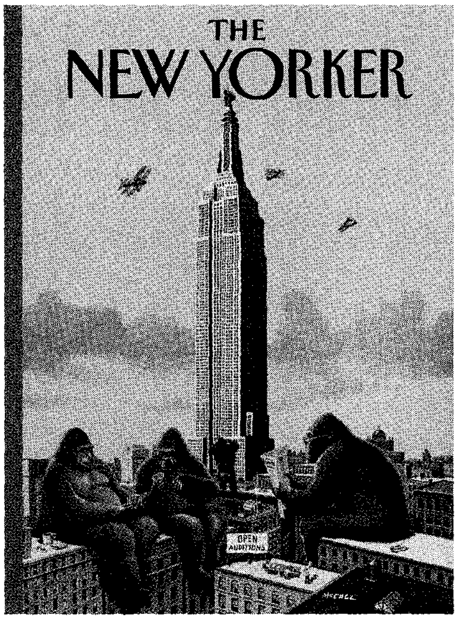
his long stage experience with Shakespeare to play this flea-ridden narcissist who cadged from his friends for thirty-five years and boasted about a monumental literary work (an oral history of underground New York) that in fact remained mostly in his head. When Holm tears off his shirt at a party and does an Indian dance on a table, he seems to be both Lear and the Fool at once. His old rummy is so fiercely joyous and egotistical that he seems to burn away embarrassment.

The heart of the movie is Gould's mysterious hold on Mitchell. Married, with two daughters, Mitchell (played by Tucci) puts on his Brooks Brothers rig every day and goes to work. He is as regular in his habits as an insurance executive—formal, reserved, yet gracious and attentive—and he would seem, on the surface, to be Gould's opposite in every way. Yet a kinship develops between the bourgeois and the bum, which the movie develops with great delicacy. Mitchell's first Profile, "Professor Sea Gull," made Gould a celebrity in New York, and Mitchell appears to have felt responsible for what he had created. Despite spasms of irritation with Gould, he struggled for years to maintain the man's morale, his superb illusions about himself. But what did Gould do to the great Mitchell? The second Profile was the last piece Mitchell published, though he continued to come to the office, and write, for another thirty-two years. The movie gently tries to reinforce the impression, which Mitchell first created, that Gould's inability to get his masterpiece down on paper somehow caused Mitchell to make his own renunciation. Who knows the truth? As Gould ages and falls apart, and Mitchell begins to lose his way as a writer, any semblance of drama in the material collapses into a restrained kind of sentimentality. Tucci has given the material a fine sense of tact; he has re-created an older, more generous New York, mellow as amber. But the gentle pathos of "Joe Gould's Secret" makes one uneasy. If Gould's entertaining shenanigans and his spectacular, self-chosen failure caused Mitchell to despair of publication, then Gould was more dangerous, and Mitchell more susceptible, or even more foolish, than anyone has yet been willing to say. And if they didn't, I'm not sure what the point of the movie is. ♦



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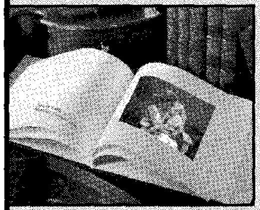

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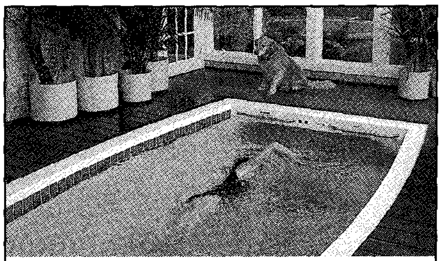

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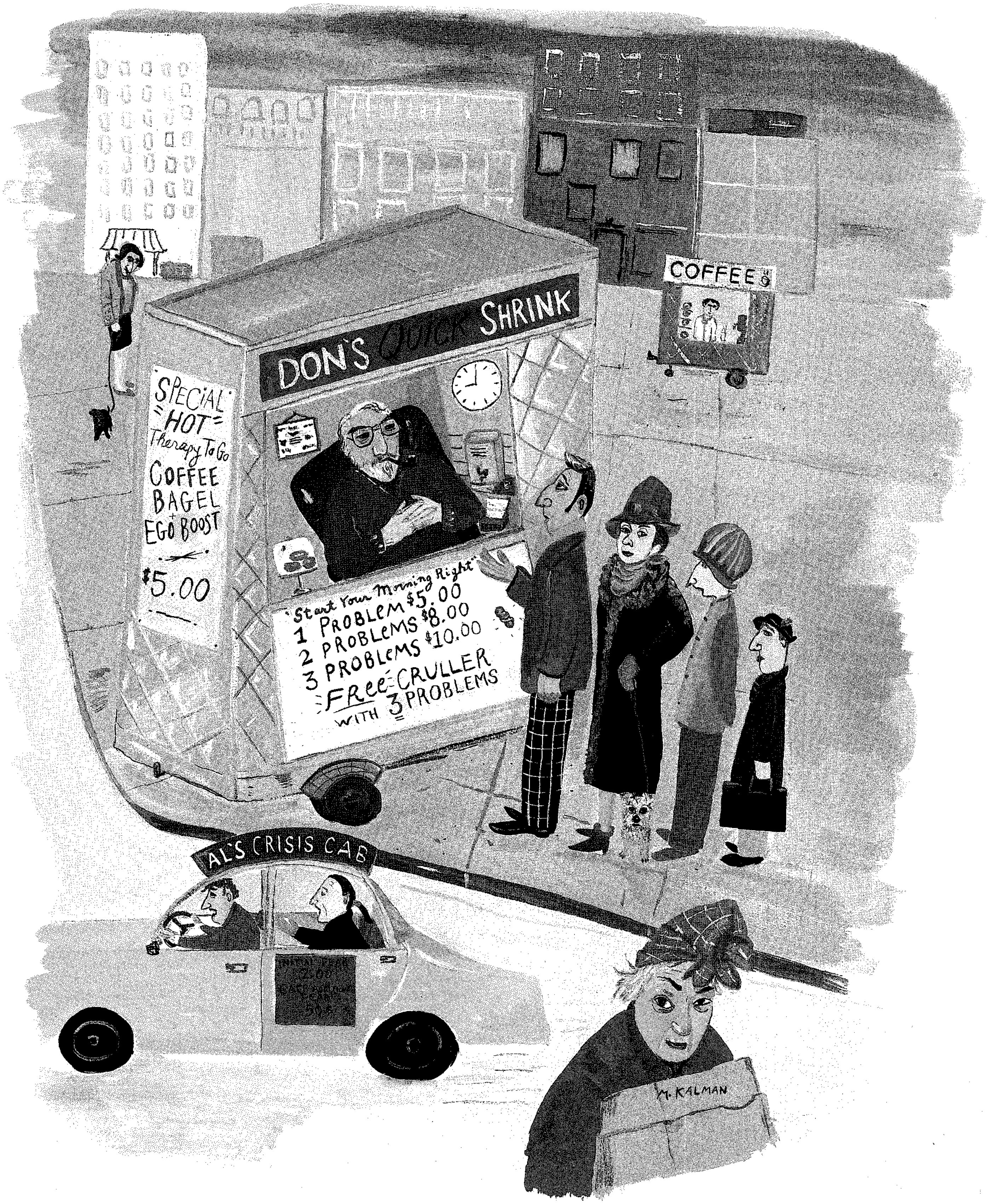
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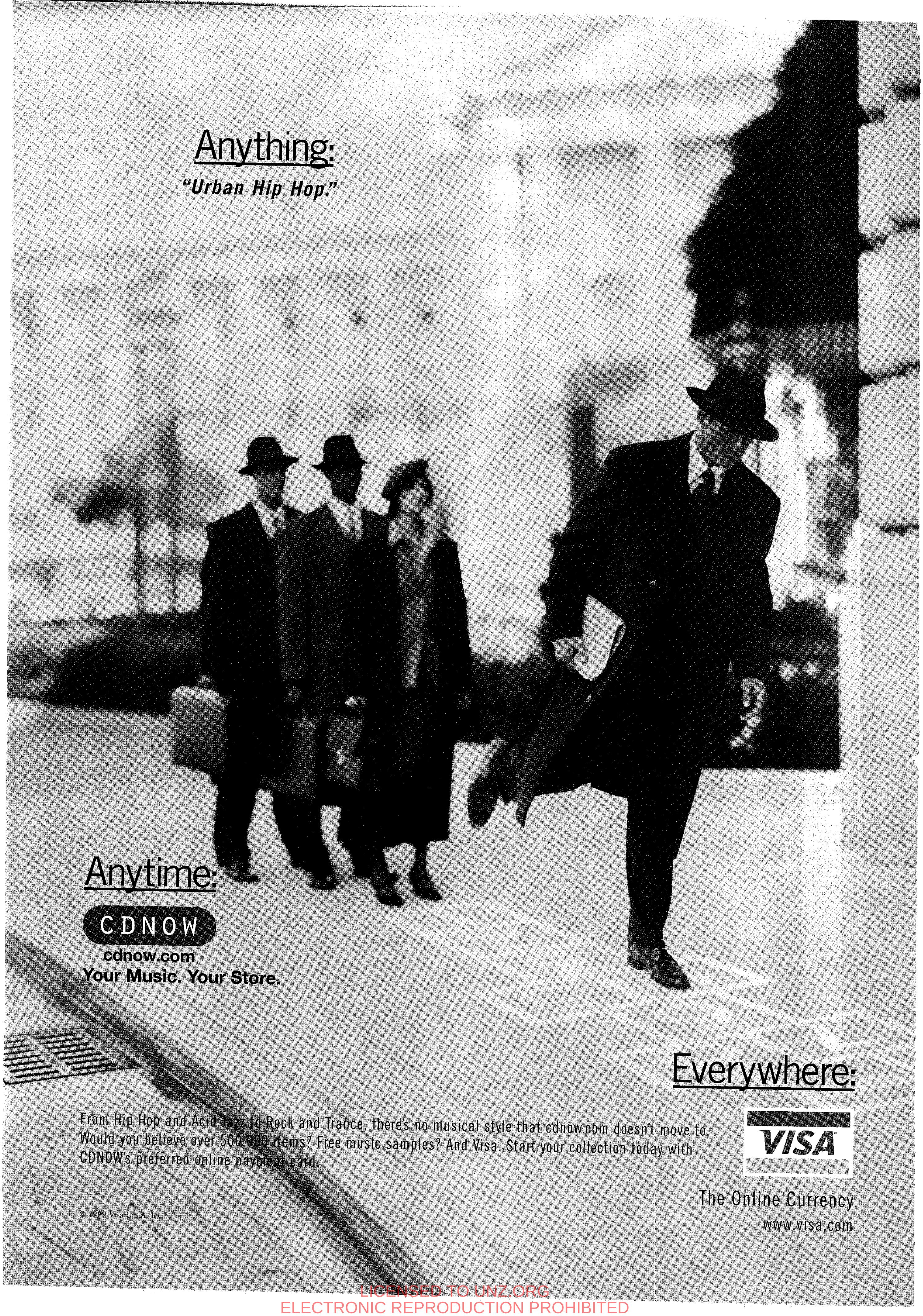

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